A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 4

In the Eye of the Storm: 1957–1959

Melvyn C. Goldstein

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

A History of Modern Tibet,
Volume 4

A

Philip E. Lilienthal

BOOK

The Philip E. Lilienthal imprint
honors special books
in commemoration of a man whose work
at University of California Press from 1954 to 1979
was marked by dedication to young authors
and to high standards in the field of Asian Studies.
Friends, family, authors, and foundations have together
endowed the Lilienthal Fund, which enables UC Press
to publish under this imprint selected books
in a way that reflects the taste and judgment
of a great and beloved editor.

A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 4

In the Eye of the Storm: 1957–1959

Melvyn C. Goldstein

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

University of California Press, one of the most distinguished university presses in the United States, enriches lives around the world by advancing scholarship in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Its activities are supported by the UC Press Foundation and by philanthropic contributions from individuals and institutions. For more information, visit www.ucpress.edu.

University of California Press
Oakland, California

© 2019 by Melvyn C. Goldstein

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Goldstein, Melvyn C., author.
Title: A history of modern Tibet. Volume 4, In the eye of the storm, 1957–1959 / Melvyn C. Goldstein.
Description: Oakland, California : University of California Press, [2019] | Includes bibliographical references and index. |
Identifiers: LCCN 2019001685 (print) | LCCN 2019006265 (ebook) | ISBN 9780520972254 (ebook) | ISBN 9780520278554 (cloth : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Tibet Autonomous Region (China)—History—1951- | Tibet Autonomous Region (China)—Politics and government—1951- | Tibet Autonomous Region (China)—History—Uprising of 1959.
Classification: LCC DS786 (ebook) | LCC DS786 .G635 2019 (print) | DDC 951/.5055—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2019001685

Manufactured in the United States of America
28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To the late Gelek Rinpoche, a great friend and colleague in
the study of Tibetan history

To the late J. T. Surkhang, for all his help over many years on the nuances
of Lhasa aristocratic society and modern history

To my two wonderful grandsons, Owen and Henry
and most of all, once again, to CMB

The publisher and the University of California Press Foundation gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Philip E. Lilienthal Imprint in Asian Studies, established by a major gift from Sally Lilienthal.

We cannot be certain about being right about the future; but we can be almost certain of being wrong about the future, if we are wrong about the past.

—G. K. CHESTERTON

Learning history means engaging with aspects of the past that are troubling, as well as those that are heroic.

—JAMES R. GROSSMAN

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations *xi*
Preface *xiii*
Acknowledgments *xxi*
List of Abbreviations *xxiii*
Glossary of Key People and Terms *xxvii*

1. Introduction: Traditional Tibetan Society *1*
2. Historical Antecedents *20*
3. Khamba Developments in Lhasa and Saipan *74*
4. The CIA, Phala, and Chushigandru *101*
5. Chushigandru in Lhoka *128*
6. Chushigandru and the PLA *149*
7. The Fall of Fan Ming *181*
8. The Kashag Responds *212*
9. The Namseling Delegation and Chushigandru *246*
10. Chushigandru after Shang Ganden Chöngor *271*
11. At the Edge of the Precipice *315*
12. The Lhasa Uprising Begins *354*
13. Chinese Responses and the Dalai Lama's Flight *401*

14. Over the Cliff *439*

15. The End of Old Tibet *461*

16. Some Final Thoughts and What-ifs *490*

Appendix A. Correct Tibetan Spellings *503*
Appendix B. Kashag's Edict from Lhüntse Dzong (26 March 1959) *523*
References *527*
Index *539*

ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURES

1. Some leading officials in the Tibet Work Committee *35*
2. Page 1 of Tibetan codebook *85*
3. Chushigandru fighters, 1959 *134*
4. Shang Ganden Chöngor Monastery and Namling Dzong *156*
5. Dalai Lama taking his Geshe exam at Drepung Monastery, 29 August 1958 *214*
6. Prime Minister Nehru on yak, 1958 *216*
7. Crowd in front of Norbulinga, 10 March 1959 *355*
8. Crowd by the stone lion statues at Norbulinga's main gate, 10 March 1959 *356*
9. Ta Lama Jawdang *378*
10. Dalai Lama escaping Tibet, 1959 *440*
11. Leading officials during the flight to India, 1959 *442*
12. Dalai Lama escaping Tibet (Chushigandru fighters with Phala, the Dalai Lama, and Kundeling), 1959 *471*
13. Dalai Lama escaping with Surkhang and Phala, 1959 *472*
14. Kalön Surkhang about to read the proclamation announcing a new government at Lhüntse Dzong, 1959 *474*
15. Dalai Lama at the Indian border, 1959 *479*

MAPS

1. China/Tibet—political and ethnographic Tibet *xxxv*
2. The battles of Gombo Tashi in 1958 *xxxvi*
3. The main route from Lhasa to India *xxxvii*
4. Tibet with Back Tibet and Front Tibet *xxxviii*
5. Lhasa city *xxxix*

PREFACE

Understanding the complex history of the period from 1957 to 1959 is essential for understanding Tibetan history in the 1950s, and by extension, Tibetan history in the twentieth century and beyond. This period commenced in January 1957, when the Dalai Lama made the decision to return to Lhasa from India despite the strong urging of many of his top officials and his two older brothers, Gyalo Thondup and Taktse Rinpoche. They had wanted him to stay in exile and lead a pro-independence resistance movement, but the Dalai Lama was not convinced there was a real commitment of support from America, so instead took the advice of Prime Minster Nehru and returned to focus on preserving his internal autonomy by working cooperatively with the Chinese under the terms of the Seventeen-Point Agreement.

The period ended in March 1959, when thousands of Lhasa residents streamed to Norbulinga, the Dalai Lama's Summer Palace, to try to block him from going to see a performance at the Chinese Military Headquarters. This large demonstration almost immediately morphed into the Lhasa Uprising, which a week later, resulted in the Dalai Lama secretly fleeing to southern Tibet and India, followed a few days later by the short, but bloody, "Battle for Lhasa," and then, almost immediately, by the replacement of Tibet's unique Buddhist civilization with a new society based on socialist institutions. In Chinese jargon, the "old society" (Tib. jitso nyingpa), as they called traditional society, was replaced with a "new society" (Tib. jitso sarpa).

The goal of this, the fourth and final volume of the *The History of Modern Tibet,* is to examine how and why this occurred. Utilizing a large corpus of Chinese government documents, as well as hundreds of oral history interviews with Tibetans and Chinese, including the Dalai Lama, this volume will present a new, nonpartisan analysis that reassesses the policies and decisions of Mao Zedong, the

Dalai Lama, the Khamba insurgents, and the CIA, focusing not on what *should be,* but what was, and how it came to be that way, and what other alternatives might have been taken.

However, before embarking on this task, it is important to clarify two different meanings of "Tibet."

WHAT IS/WAS TIBET?

In 1949–50, ethnic Tibetans in Tibet-China resided in an area as vast as Western Europe but were not part of a single polity. A little less than half were ruled by the government of the Dalai Lamas, which had been in power since 1642. The rest were located in parts of what today are the neighboring Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan (see map 1).[1] All these ethnic Tibetan regions had once been united under the rule of the early kings of Tibet, but during the eleven centuries following the breakup of the Tibetan kingdom in the ninth century A.D., many Tibetan regions on the periphery became independent under local chiefs or kings, or fell under the authority of neighboring states. Consequently, when the People's Republic of China was inaugurated in 1949, the Dalai Lama's Tibet was operating as a de facto independent polity, but the other ethnic Tibetan areas were politically part of the Chinese provinces of Xikang, Gansu, Yunnan, Sichuan, and Qinghai.[2]

Tibetan historiography has utilized a convention to convey this salient distinction that was popularized by the late diplomat/historian Hugh Richardson. He differentiated between "political" Tibet—the polity ruled by the Dalai Lamas, and "ethnographic" Tibet—the other areas such as Amdo and Kham that were *outside* that state. He wrote: "In 'political' Tibet the Tibetan government have ruled *continuously* from the earliest times down to 1951. The region beyond that to the north and east [Amdo and Kham] . . . is its 'ethnographic' extension which people of Tibetan race once inhabited exclusively and where they are still in the majority. In that wider area, 'political' Tibet exercised jurisdiction *only in certain places and at irregular intervals;* for the most part, local lay or monastic chiefs were in control of districts of varying size. From the eighteenth century onwards the region was subject to sporadic Chinese infiltration."[3]

---

[1] There were also ethnic Tibetans living in parts of India (in Ladakh, Sikkim, Northern Uttarakhand, Northern Himachal Pradesh, and Arunachal Pradesh), Nepal, and Bhutan.

[2] Xikang Province predominately consisted of Khambas, who are one of the main ethnic subgroups of Tibetans. It was created by the Republic of China in 1939 and then merged into Sichuan Province in 1955, becoming the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. For detailed discussions of Xikang in the 1950s, see volume 3 of *A History of Modern Tibet* (Goldstein 2014).

[3] Richardson 1984, 1 (emphasis added). For a detailed discussion of how this came about, see "What Is Tibet" at http://case.edu/affil/tibet/tibetanSociety/social.htm, or Goldstein 1994, 76–111.

This distinction is not just academic quibbling, but was the functional reality on the ground. In 1949–50, there was no ambiguity regarding where the authority of the Tibetan government ended and China began. For example, in Sichuan Province, it was the Upper Yangtze River (called the Drichu in Tibetan and Jinsha in Chinese). The Lhasa government had no officials or troops east of the Drichu, nor did the Chinese have any control west of it. Consequently, when Mao's People's Liberation Army troops took possession of the Qinghai/Gansu region (that was east of the border) in 1949 from Chiang Kai-shek and the Muslim warlord Ma Bufang, political Tibet neither sent its troops to defend these ethnographic Tibetan areas nor issued any protests/appeals for help to the international community saying that its territory had been invaded. On the other hand, when the PLA forces crossed the Upper Yangtze River on 7 October 1950 and attacked territory under the authority of political Tibet, the Tibetan government's armies that were defending the border at once engaged the Chinese forces in battle and a month later, on 7 November 1950, issued an emotional plea for help to the United Nations protesting the invasion of its territory. One part of that plea for help mentioned the border and said,

> Chinese troops, without warning or provocation, crossed the Dre Chu River [the Upper Yangtze River], *which has for long been the boundary into Tibetan territory,* at a number of places on 7th October 1950. In quick succession places of strategic importance . . . fell to the Chinese. . . . The armed invasion of Tibet for the incorporation of Tibet within the fold of Chinese communism through sheer physical force is a clear case of aggression.[4]

Similarly, six months later, when the Tibetan government and Beijing agreed to the Seventeen-Point Agreement, "ethnographic Tibet" was not included in this agreement.

This distinction between Political and Ethnographic Tibet is essential, because the political and popular literature (and sometimes even academic writings) on Tibet often use the term *Tibet* to refer to both political and ethnographic Tibet, without specifying which is meant. Thus, an event stated to have occurred in Tibet may well have occurred not in actual "political Tibet" but rather in "ethnographic" Tibet. For example, many scholars and Tibetan exile activists erroneously state that China invaded Tibet in 1949, because that is when the PLA took control over Amdo (Qinghai province) (in "ethnographic" Tibet). Consequently, unless otherwise specified, when the term Tibet is used in this volume, the referent is political Tibet.

---

[4] Cited verbatim in FO371/84454, telegram from the United Kingdom's U.N. delegation to the Foreign Office, dated 14 November 1959 (emphasis added).

SOURCES

Primary Materials: Government Records and Documents

The U.S. government provided limited access to State Department documents via the National Archives and the Foreign Relations of the United States publication series. However, many documents have been withheld and were not released despite Freedom of Information Act requests and appeals. The CIA and the National Security Agency have released virtually no documents on their planning, goals, and decisions regarding the Khamba insurgents in Tibet in the 1950s, on the grounds of national security. As absurd as this may sound, almost seven decades after these events occurred, it is part of the reality of studying modern Tibetan history.

The British national archives (in the Public Records Office) contained many important primary materials for the previous volumes, but was of limited utility for the years after 1953, when the Government of India stopped sending copies of the "Monthly Report" from its Lhasa Consulate to London.

The Chinese governmental archives are basically closed, although a sizable group of very important Chinese government archival documents was obtained by the author in India, where they had been taken at the end of the Cultural Revolution. I refer to them collectively in this volume as: Dui xizang gongzuo de zhongyao zhishi [wei chuban de shouji] ("Important Instructions on the Work in Tibet")—or in footnotes, as "DPRC" (Documents from the People's Republic of China). These will be made available online to scholars after the publication of this book as part of the Tibet Oral History Archive Project (TOHAP) website at the U.S. Library of Congress. Other important Chinese documents were found in compilations of official documents published in China, as well as in books on the period. Similarly, a few documents were made available to me by the Tibetan government-in-exile and by the Library of Tibet Works and Archives in Dharamsala, India.

The Government of India's (GOI) archives regarding Tibet are also closed, although some useful documents have been published in the many volumes that comprise the "Selected Works of Nehru."

In addition, the Shakabpa family has graciously made available to me a number of documents from the library of T. W. D. Shakabpa, including the handwritten diary that Tsepön Shakabpa kept for Jenkhentsisum (JKTS), the important émigré resistance organization based in Kalimpong/Darjeeling. This diary consists of chronological entries handwritten in school copybooks in the cursive script by Tsepön Shakabpa, who was one of JKTS's three principals and also acted as the group's secretary. These entries discuss the content of internal meetings and discussions/meetings with nonmembers, such as GOI officials, Sikkimese royals, and other Tibetans.

Taken together, these primary data provide an invaluable window to the history of the 1950s. There are, to be sure, still gaps and confusions whose clarification will have to wait until the remaining archival materials are released, but the size and quality of the corpus of primary materials available for this history are important and allowed me to understand the period more fully.

Since most of the documents in this volume are not available elsewhere to scholars, when possible the full text of each document is cited, so that readers can see the actual content of the whole document rather than have to depend on one- or two-sentence summaries of its content. In addition, for the same reason, in many cases I have also provided the original Tibetan and Chinese of key clauses (in Chinese pinyin and Tibetan romanization).

Oral History Data

Oral history—the collection of primary historical data by interviewing eyewitnesses concerning some period or event—can provide invaluable information as a supplement to government documents, and are especially useful when such records are not readily available. Oral history accounts, therefore, are used frequently in this volume. They have been translated literally in order to retain more of the flavor of the original Tibetan.

Funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (RO-22251–91 and RO-22754–94) enabled about five hundred hours of interviews to be conducted on the 1950s with over one hundred thirty-five former officials and other relevant individuals in China, India, Nepal, England, and North America. The interviewees included important Tibetan figures such as the Dalai Lama, Ngabö, Taklha, Taring, and important Chinese and Tibetan cadres such as Fan Ming, Zhang Xiangming, Jambey Gyatso, and Phüntso Wangye. Parts of interviews conducted for volume 1 of the *History of Modern Tibet* series were also utilized. These were collected with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, RO-20261–82, and RO-20886–85. Several retired members of the CIA who were involved with ST CIRCUS, the CIA's Tibet Project in the 1950s, were interviewed as well. This oral history research also received generous support from the Henry Luce Foundation and the National Endowment of Humanities (RZ-20585–00, RZ-50326–05, and RZ-50845–08).

Most of these interviews were recorded on audiotape in people's homes, so sometimes kids were crying and phones were ringing in the background, but they are presented unedited. In most cases, follow-up visits were made at a later date to clarify information in the initial interviews or to cover events not discussed initially. For the interviews dealing with the topics covered in this volume, the author's long-time colleague on modern Tibet, Dr. Paljor Tsarong, a PhD in anthropology, conducted most of the interviews in India either alone or with me, and I did the interviews in Tibet and other parts of China. In Tibet, I was assisted by the late Tashi Tsering, my friend and former classmate from the University of Washington, who returned to China from America in 1964 and, after incarceration during the Cultural Revolution, became a professor at Tibet University. Trinley Dorje, a Lhasa resident (Tib, mimang) who worked as my assistant thoughout my research in Tibet, was also present at most interiews. Both Drs. Tsarong and Goldstein conducted interviews in the United States. Almost all of the translations of the interviews were done by Shelling, Tsewang Namgyal, a brilliant, former Tibetan government aristocratic official who spent several decades after 1959 in Chinese prisons and labor camps before going to India and then the United States. His fluency in Chinese was gained while a prisoner in Tibet.

When contradictory versions of important events were collected, these were evaluated in accordance with (1) understanding of how the traditional system operated, (2) other accounts, (3) the source of the subject's information (hearsay or firsthand), (4) the relationship of the subject to the event—for example, whether he was a relative or ally of the actors in the event, and (5) the subject's reputation for duplicity or honesty. On many important issues a decision had to be made regarding which version to accept, and a great deal of time was spent trying to clarify issues by re-interviewing and conducting interviews with new individuals. Although alternative explanations of incidents are sometimes presented, usually in footnotes, it was not always possible or desirable to do so.

All these interviews are currently undergoing final editing by me. They are in the process of being published in installments on an online web archive at the Asian Division of the Library of Congress that is titled the "Tibet Oral History Archive Project" (TOHAP). The interviews are available in the original Tibetan audio with English translations that can be read while listening to the tapes at www.loc.gov/collections/tibetan-oral-history-project/about-this-collection/.

As of now, the TOHAP website has online interviews with 125 subjects (comprising 403 tapes or about 450 hours and about 6,500 pages of single-spaced text). Each interview includes metadata on location, date, length of recording, interviewer, translator, and age of interviewee. By the time this volume appears in print, it is expected that almost all the remaining historical/political interviews used in this volume will be available on the TOHAP website. In coming years, a collection of interviews with older Drepung monks on life in Drepung Monastery before 1959 and a very large collection of interviews with common folk on their lives before and after 1959 will be added, as will a collection of the documents used in this and the previous volumes.

Each interview used in this volume is footnoted in the following format: Phüntso Yügye, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0031.02. The ID "H.0031.02" indicates that this interview is part of the "political/history" (H) collection and is the second tape of interviewee number 31, who is/was named Phüntso Yügye.

Memoirs and Autobiographies

An important source of information on the period is published accounts by participants. These memoir materials were published in India and in Tibet/China/

Hong Kong in both Tibetan and Chinese, and in a few cases, English. They range from books such as those written by Alo Chöndze, Kundeling, and Namseling, to articles in journals/magazines and collected volumes, such as the valuable series published in Tibet called *Bod kyi lo rgyus rig gnas dpyad gzhi'i rgyu cha bdam bsgrigs pa* (Selected materials on the history and culture of Tibet).

Newspapers and Secondary Sources

Published magazine articles from China during this period were accessed via the *Survey of Mainland China Press* series. Newspapers from Western countries and India were also consulted, as was the Tibetan-language newspaper published in Kalimpong called *Yul phyogs so so'i gsar 'gyur me long* (the "Mirror of World News," better known in English simply as the Tibetan Mirror). Books published in China and the West were, of course, also consulted. Some of these included primary interview data or, on the Chinese side, government records otherwise unavailable to me. The *Bod ljongs nyin re tshags pa* (Tibet Daily Newspaper) from the 1950s was also utilized. The full set of the *Tibet Daily* for the 1950s is available at the Library of Congress, Asian Division.

CITATION CONVENTIONS

Throughout the book, square brackets [] are used for comments or clarifications added by the author. For example, in the following quotation:

[If this occurs] we absolutely will fight back militarily and contend for victory according to the principle of "reasonable, moderate, and beneficial to us" (Ch. youli youli youjie).

In this quotation, "[If this occurs]" was added to the literal translation for clarification. By contrast, the words in parentheses, "(Ch. youli youli youjie)," represent the original Chinese phrase that was translated as "reasonable, moderate, and beneficial to us."

ROMANIZATION CONVENTIONS

Tibetan written and spoken forms diverge considerably in that the written form contains consonant clusters that are not pronounced. For example, the written Tibetan word *bsgrubs* is actually pronounced "drub," and *rtsis dpon* is pronounced "tsipön."

Throughout the text of this book, the spoken (phonetic) pronunciation is given for Tibetan terms with the proper Tibetan spellings (in romanization) cited according to the system of T. V. Wylie (1959), which is documented in the separate "List of Correct Tibetan Spellings" at the end of this book.

References to an article or book written in Tibetan cite the author's name in romanization. However, given the divergence between spoken and written Tibetan, when the name of the Tibetan author also appears in the narrative, the phonetic version of his name is included in the reference to enable readers to connect the person in the text and the author of the book or article. For example, a book by Zhwa sgab pa will be listed in the References as: Zhwa sgab pa (Shakabpa).

The phonetic rendering of Tibetan names has no universally accepted standard, so sometimes Tibetan names and terms cited in quotations from other sources will vary considerably from those used in the narrative. For example, Dzongpön is spelled in some quotations as Jongpoen, and Lobsang Samden is sometimes written as Lopsang Samten.

Chinese names are cited with the family name before the personal name, e.g., in Zhang Guohua, Zhang is the family name and Guohua is the personal name. Tibetan names are listed with the family name first followed by a comma and then the personal name. The comma is necessary since not all Tibetans have family names. For example, in Changöba, Dorje Ngüdrub, the family name is Changöba, and the personal name is Dorje Ngüdrub. However, in Tsering Droma, there is no family name and Tsering Droma is entirely the personal name.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the assistance of many individuals in and outside of China who helped point me to key questions and issues as well as to the actors still alive who could shed light on these questions. They, and the many individuals who agreed to be interviewed, did this because they felt strongly that future generations of Tibetans and Chinese should know what happened in the 1950s. There is no way to repay their advice and assistance, and it is regrettable that in many instances their names will have to remain anonymous. But their wish—that future generations should have access to an objective and nonpartisan account of what happened—was the guiding light throughout the project.

As with previous volumes, I want to express special thanks to the Shakabpa family for giving me access to valuable letters and documents from one of the great figures in modern Tibetan history, the late Tsipön Shakabpa. Special thanks also go to Chen Zonglie, an award-winning, photo-journalist who worked as a photographer for the Tibet People's Daily for twenty-five years. He very kindly showed me his magnificent photographic collection and gave me permission to use images from it in this book. I also want to acknowledge the assistance the Tibetan Museum in Dharamsala who assited me with their collection of photographs from Tibet in the 1950s, and gave me permission to use some.

I also want to thank the many excellent Chinese and American students at Case Western Reserve University, who worked for the University's Center for Research on Tibet on this project.

I especially want to thank to T. N. Shelling, a Tibetan aristocrat-scholar who worked at the Center for many years translating Tibetan documents and interviews, as well as Dr. Paljor Tsarong, a fellow Anthropologist who shares my love

for history. He has freely shared his deep knowledge of Tibetan modern history, government, and society, and took time from his busy schedule to critically review an early draft of this volume.

Finally, I cannot end this section without once again extending my sincere thanks to Reed Malcolm, my longtime editor at the University of California Press. As in the past, he and his staff have supported this project and made it easy for me to focus on finishing the manuscript.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.	indicates the start of an interviewee’s answer
abbr.	abbreviation
ADC	aide-de-camp, adjutant
anon.	anonymous
CC	Central Committee (of the CCP)
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
Ch.	Chinese language
CHMO	Used in reference citations for Bod rang skyong ljongs chab gros rig gnas lo rygus dpyad gzhi’i rygu cha zhib ‘jug u yon lhan khang [Tibet Autonomous Region Political Consultative Conference’s Historical and Cultural Materials Research Committee], ed. *Bod kyi rig gnas lo rgyus dpyad gzhi’i rgyu cha cha bdams bsgrigs pa* [Collection of Tibetan Cultural and Historical Materials].
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CONGEN	Consul General
CPC	Communist Party of China (sm. CCP)
CPPCC	Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference
DPRC	Documents from the PRC in the Goldstein Collection (see references)
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Services
FO	Foreign Office (Great Britain)
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States Series
GMD	Guomindang

GOI	Government of India
HICOM	High Commissioner
Hind.	Hindi
HMG	His Majesty's Government
IB	Intelligence Bureau (of Government of India)
Jenkhentsisum	The name of the major anti-Chinese émigré group in India. The term is an acronym of the titles of the group's three principals: Gyalo Thondup, Tsipön Shakabpa, and Khenjung Lobsang Gyensen. Lit. *jen* (older brother), *khen* (Khenjung), and *tsi* (Tsipön). The fourth syllable, *sum,* means the three of them.
JKTS	abbr. of Jenkhentsisum.
KMT	same as GMD
lit.	literally
ms.	manuscript
n.d.	no date
NSC	National Security Council (U.S. White House)
NEFA	Northeast Frontier Agency (roughly today's Arunachal Pradesh)
NCNA	New China News Agency
NCO	Non-commissioned officers
NPC	National People's Congress (of PRC)
NWB	Northwest Bureau
OPC	Office of Policy Coordination (CIA)
PCTAR	Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region
PLA	People's Liberation Army
POS	Political Officer in Sikkim. The POS was a British official who oversaw the administration of Sikkim under British India and the British Trade Offices in Tibet until Indian independence in 1947. After that, the Government of India appointed their own officials as POS.
PRC	People's Republic of China
Q.	indicates the start of an interviewer's question
SCMP	Survey of China Mainland Press
sm.	same as
SPO	Political Officer in Sikkim
SWB	Southwest Bureau
TAR	Tibet Autonomous Region
TFRC	Tibet Flood Relief Committee
Tib.	Tibetan language
TPCC	Tibetan People's Consultative Conference

TWC	Tibet Work Committee (The full name was Chinese Communist Party Tibet Work Committee; Ch. Zhonggong Xizang Gongwei). This was the Communist Party's Administrative Office in Tibet.
USSR	Soviet Union

GLOSSARY OF KEY PEOPLE AND TERMS

Alo Chöndze	A leader of the second People's Association.
amban	Imperial commissioners sent by the Qing Dynasty to Tibet.
Amdowa	A person from Amdo.
Andru Jinda	Gombo Tashi
Andrutsang (Andru)	The family name of Gombo Tashi.
Apa Pant	The government of India's political officer in Sikkim, 1955–1961.
Athar (Litang Athar)	One of the two CIA trainees parachuted into Tibet in 1957.
Back Tibet	A Qing dynasty term referring to the territory of the Panchen Lama and the territory of Tsang.
Big Three Monastic Seats	*See* Three Monastic Seats
Buddha Jayanti	The holiday celebrating the 2,500th anniversary of the birth and enlightenment/death of the Shakyamuni Buddha, held in India in 1956–57.
chabu	A type of economic manager in charge of the wealth and property of a monastic college.
Chamdo	The town and region in Eastern Tibet that was the headquarters of the governor general and the target of the PLA's invasion in 1950. It became the headquarters of the Chamdo Liberation Committee after 1950.
chandzö	A type of manager working for a monastery, labrang, or aristocratic family.

Che Jigme	One of the two top officials in the Panchen Lama's Administrative Council (Tib. Nangmagang; Ch. Kanding).
Chushigandru	The mainly Khamba Tibetan insurgency organization in Tibet. It set up its military headquarters in Lhoka in June 1958.
dayan	The Tibetan pronunciation of the Chinese silver dollar (Ch. da yuan) that had the image of Yuan Shikai on its face, used by the Chinese government in Tibet because Tibetans did not accept Chinese paper currency.
Deng Shaodong	The deputy commander of the PLA's Military Headquarters in Lhasa.
Deng Xiaoping	One of the two main leaders of the Southwest Bureau in 1950–52. In 1952 he moved to Beijing and then held a number of important posts such as vice premier and deputy chair of the committee on finance. In 1954 he became secretary general of the Central Committee's Secretariat and the director of the CCP's Organization Department. In 1956 he became general secretary and member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo.
Dekyilinga	The name of the British Indian government's Bureau Office in Lhasa. It became the Indian consulate office after Indian independence in 1947.
democratic reforms	The CCP's land reforms that replaced the traditional Tibetan socioeconomic institutions with a new socialist land and class system.
divine lottery (senriy)	A type of divination frequently used by the Tibetan government to make major decisions. The lottery works by two (or more) alternative answers being written on paper and rolled into dough balls of exactly the same size and weight. These are placed in a bowl and shaken before the statue or icon of a deity until one ball rolls out. The answer inside the ball that falls out is considered the answer chosen by the deity.
dobdo	A kind of deviant fighting/punk monk found in many larger monasteries.
dotse	A Tibetan currency unit that was equal to 50 ngüsang.
Drigutang	A pastoral area in Lhoka district where Chushigandru set up its first military headquarters.
drönyerchemmo	lord chamberlain
dzasa	1. a high rank in the Tibetan government. 2. a title of some labrang managers such as Kundeling Labrang.
dzong	A district
dzongpön	Head of a district

Ecclesiastic office (Yigtsang)	The highest office in the monk official side of the Tibetan government. It was headed by four officials called trunyichemmo.
Fan Ming	A PLA commander and senior Northwest Bureau cadre who was the representative to the Panchen Lama and a major official in the Tibet Work Committee in Lhasa.
Gadrang	The Jigyab Khembo during 1957–59.
Gombo Tashi (Andrutsang)	The Litang trader who became the leader of the Chushigandru insurgency organization.
Guomindang (GMD)	The nationalist party that ruled China until the CCP defeated them and established the PRC in October 1949. It is also romanized as Kuomintang (KMT).
Gyadotsang	An important Litang Khamba family who fled to Tibet in 1956 and set up a household in Kalimpong. Family members worked closely with JKTS in communicating with Chushigandru.
Gyalo Thondup	The second oldest brother of the Dalai Lama and one of the leaders of Jenkhentsisum. He became the liaison person for the CIA with Chushigandru.
Holober, Frank	A key CIA officer involved in the agency's Tibet Project.
Jenkhentsisum (JKTS)	The informal name of the anti-Chinese exile group in India. The term is an acronym of the titles of its three leaders, Gyalo Thondup, Tsipön Shakabpa, and Khenjung Lobsang Gyentsen. Literally, *jen* (older brother), *khen* (Khenjung), *tsi* (Tsipön), *sum* (the three).
Jiangdong	The area east of the Upper Yangtze River; that is, Ganzi Prefecture in Sichuan Province. Jiangdong literally means "east of the river."
Jiang Huating	A PLA artillery officer who defected to Chushigandru in 1958. His Tibetan name is Lobsang Tashi.
Jigyab Khembo	The highest monk official in the government. His responsibilities included oversight of the Dalai Lama's personal attendants and private treasury (Tib. dzöbu). Between 1952 and 1956, the Jigyab Khembo was the Dalai Lama's brother, Lobsang Samden. After that it was Gadrang.
Jindag	A title of status for important donors to monasteries. It was often used when talking about Andrutsang Gombo Tashi.
kalön	The title for a Kashag minister.
Kashag	The highest office in the Tibetan government. Sometimes called Cabinet or Council of Ministers.
Kedram (Kelsang Dramdü)	A captain (Tib. brgya dpon) in the Trapchi Regiment.

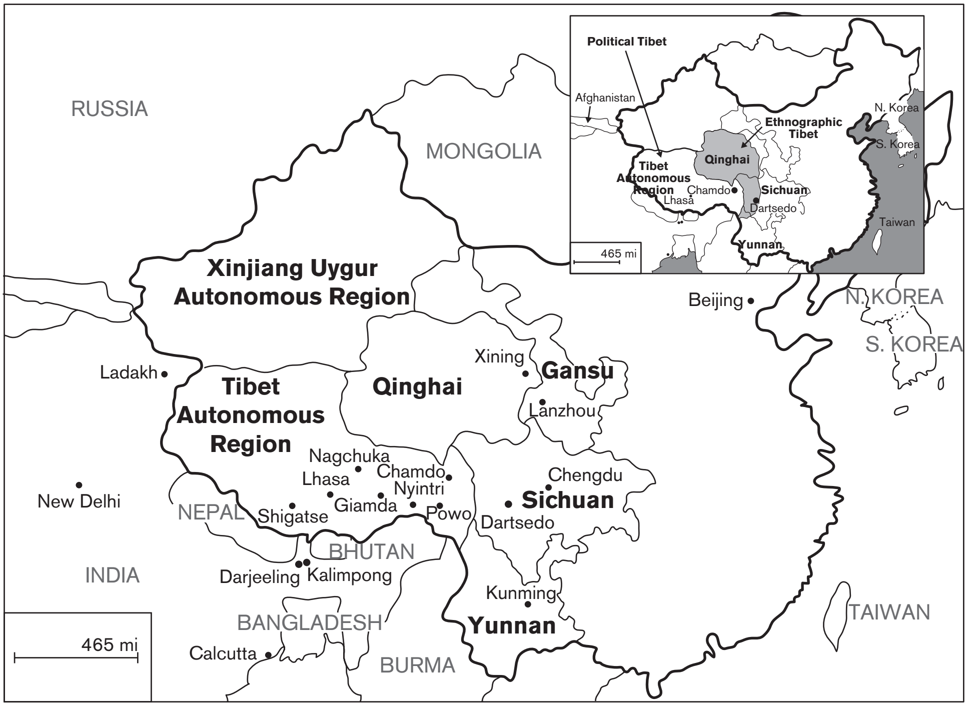
Kelsang Ngawang	A monk official under Phala who dealt with the two Khamba agents sent by the CIA for Phala.
khenjung	A monk official of the fourth rank.
kungö	An honorific term of address for aristocrats and government officials. It is something like "honorable sir."
la	An honorific particle used after names, for example, Tashi la.
labrang	1. the name of the Panchen Lama's government. 2. a large Gelugpa monastery in Gansu. 3. the corporate property-holding entity of any incarnate lama.
Lhamo Tsering	A Tibetan from Qinghai who became Gyalo Thondup's secretary/aide in CIA affairs.
Lhalu	An aristocratic official who was a kalön and the governor general of Chamdo until he was replaced by Ngabö in fall 1950.
Li Jingquan	The first party secretary of Sichuan Province.
Li Weihan.	A key official in Beijing dealing with minority nationalities. He was the director of the United Front Work Department and the State Nationalities Commission.
Ling Rinpoche	The senior tutor of the Dalai Lama.
Liu Bocheng	The commander of the Second Field Army and a major Southwest Bureau official.
Liu Shaoqi	One of the top leaders in the CCP in the 1950s. Among many positions, he was president of the People's Republic of China.
Liushar	A kalön during the 1957–59 period.
Lobsang Samden	The third oldest brother of the Dalai Lama and a monk official in the Tibetan government. He was the Jigyab Khembo during 1952–56.
Lobsang Tashi	The monk official who was one of the two Sitsab in 1950–52.
lord chamberlain (drönyerchemmo)	A senior monk official in charge of the Dalai Lama's Secretariat. In the 1950s, Phala held that position.
Lotse	A Litang Khmba who was one of the two CIA Saipan trainees parachuted into Tibet in 1957.
Lukhangwa	The lay aristocratic official who was one of the two Sitsab in 1950–52.
Maharaj Kumar	The Crown Prince of Sikkim.
mendredensum	A type of religious offering given to lamas that represents the body (via a statue), the speech (via a text/scripture), and the mind (via a stupa).
miser	A term that can refer to a bound peasant (serf) as well as a citizen, depending on context. For example, the "miser of a lord"

	connotes the bound peasant subjects of that lord, whereas the "miser of Tibet" connotes citizens of Tibet.
mönlam or mönlam chemmo	The Great Prayer Festival held in Lhasa at the start of the first Tibetan lunar month.
Mullik, Bhola Nath	The head of Indian Intelligence from1950 to 1964.
Mu Shengzhong	One of the senior cadres from the Northwest Bureau who came with Fan Ming to Lhasa.
Namseling	A Tsipön aristocratic official who was an important anti-Chinese nationalist and one of the four heads of the Revenue Office (Tsigang).
Nangmagang	The Panchen Lama's Administrative Council (called Kanding in Chinese).
NEFA	Northeast Frontier Agency, political division in British India. It became Arunachal Pradesh in 1972.
Ngabö	An aristocratic official who was a kalön and the governor general of Chamdo after Lhalu. He was the leading progressive in the Tibetan government.
Northwest Bureau (NWB)	At this time, China was divided into six geographic regions (North, Northeast, Central, East, Northwest, and Southwest), each of which had a Military-Administrative Bureau/Committee (Ch. junzheng weiyuanhui; Tib. magsi uyön lhengang) through which the PLA would administer the area until a time when "people's governments" could be established. The Southwest Bureau (SWB) (Ch. xinan ju) and the Second Field Army were in charge of Yunnan, Sichuan Guizhou, Xikang, and Tibet. The NWB (Ch. xibei ju) and the First Field Army were responsible for Qinghai, Xinjiang, Shaanxi, and Gansu. In January 1950, the main task of "liberating" Tibet had been given to the Sichuan-based Second Field Army/SWB which was under the leadership of Liu Bocheng and Deng Xiaoping. The lead army unit in the Chamdo campaign was the Second Field Army's 18th Army Corps under the command of Zhang Guohua, although they were supported by elements of the First Field Army/NWB, whose cavalry played a major role in the Chamdo campaign.
Peng Dehuai	The first secretary of the Northwest Bureau and the Commander of the First Field Army. He also commanded the PLA troops in the Korean War.
Phala	A powerful monk official from an important aristocratic family. During the period of this history he was the lord chamberlain.
Phüntso Tashi Taklha	*See* Taklha Phuntso Tashi

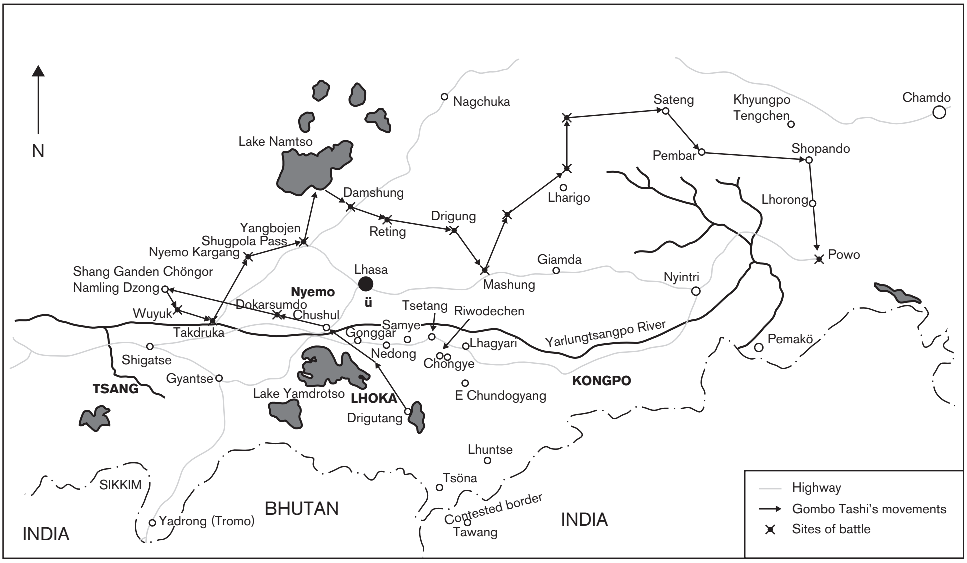
Phüntso Wangye	A Tibetan (Khamba) cadre in the Southwest Bureau who was the only Tibetan on the Tibet Work Committee in Lhasa. His name was often abbreviated as Phünwang.
Phünkang Lhajam	One of the two Sikkim royal princesses who was active as a go-between with the Americans. She was married to an aristocratic official from the Phünkang family.
Phünwang	Abbreviation of Phüntso Wangye.
political officer in Sikkim (POS)	The POS was a British official who oversaw the administration of Sikkim under British India and the British Trade Offices in Tibet until Indian independence in 1947. After that, the Government of India appointed their own officials as POS. They were something like consular heads who dealt with Tibetan affairs.
Radru Ngawang	A Litangba who was one of the top military commanders of Chushigandru.
Ragashag, Phüntso Rabgye	An aristocratic official who was a kalön in the 1950s. He died in 1957.
Reagan, John	A key CIA officer involved in the agency's Tibet Project.
rinpoche	Title for an incarnate lama.
rupön	A senior Tibetan military officer in the Tibetan army. They are called colonels in this volume.
Shakabpa	One of the three principals of Jenkhentsisum, the anti-Chinese resistance organization in Kalimpong, India.
Shang Ganden Chöngor	A monastery southwest of Lhasa in which a large government arsenal was stored and to which Gombo Tashi led a cavalry force to take control of the weapons for Chushigandru in 1958.
Shasur (Shenkawa)	An aristocratic official who was one of the kalöns in the 1957–59 period.
Sawangchemmo	A term of address for a kalön (Kashag minister).
senriy	*See* divine lottery
Shape	The title for a kalön (Kashag minister).
shengo	A junior officer in the Tibetan army in charge of a company of twenty-five troops. They are called lieutenants in this volume.
singdru	Tibetan term with connotations ranging from a sizable disturbance to a violent uprising or an organized revolt. It is the usual term Tibetans use for what is called in English the Lhasa Uprising.
Sitsab	The two officials appointed in 1950 to head the government while the Dalai Lama was in Yadong.
Southwest Bureau	*See* Northwest Bureau

ST. CIRCUS	The code name for the CIA's Tibet Project.
Surkhang	An aristocratic official who was one of the kalön (Kashag ministers) in the 1950s.
Taklha, Phüntso Tashi.	A Tibetan from Amdo who married the Dalai Lama's sister and became the commander of the Bodyguard Regiment of the Tibetan government. He was one of the few officials who knew Chinese.
Taktse Rinpoche	The eldest brother of the Dalai Lama. He went to the United States in 1950, where he was a important source of information for the State Department and CIA.
Tan Guansan	A Southwest Bureau official who was one of the leading officials in the Tibet Work Committee in Lhasa.
Tashi Bera	One of the two commanders of the Tibetan Army's Trapchi Regiment.
Three Monastic Seats	The name of the three great Gelugpa monasteries around Lhasa: Ganden, Sera, and Drepung. Together these housed about twenty thousand monks in 1959.
Trip	An area just across the Lhasa (Kyichu) river. It was the site of the PLA's major Artillery Regiment.
Tibet Work Committee	The main Chinese administrative office in Tibet in the 1950s; Ch. Xizang gongwei.
Trijang (rinpoche)	The junior tutor of the Dalai Lama.
Tromo	The Tibetan name for Yadong.
trungtsi	The acronym that refers to heads of the Ecclesiastic Office (trunyichemmo) and the Revenue Office (tsipön).
trungtsigye:	An acronym that refers to the four heads of the Ecclesiastic Office (trunyichemmo) and the four heads of the Revenue Office (tsipön). It is constructed from the first syllable of trunyichemmo plus the first syllable of tsipön plus "eight." These were the most important offices under the Kashag and often met with the Kashag to discuss important issues. They also chaired the meetings of the Tibetan Assembly.
trunyichemmo	The title for the heads of the Ecclesiastic (Yigtsang) office.
tsamba	Parched barley flour, the Tibetan staple food.
Tse ga	The Secretariat Office of the Dalai Lama.
tselabdra	The school in the Yigtsang Office that trains candidates to become new monk officials.
tsigang	Revenue Office
tsipön	The title for the heads of the Revenue Office.

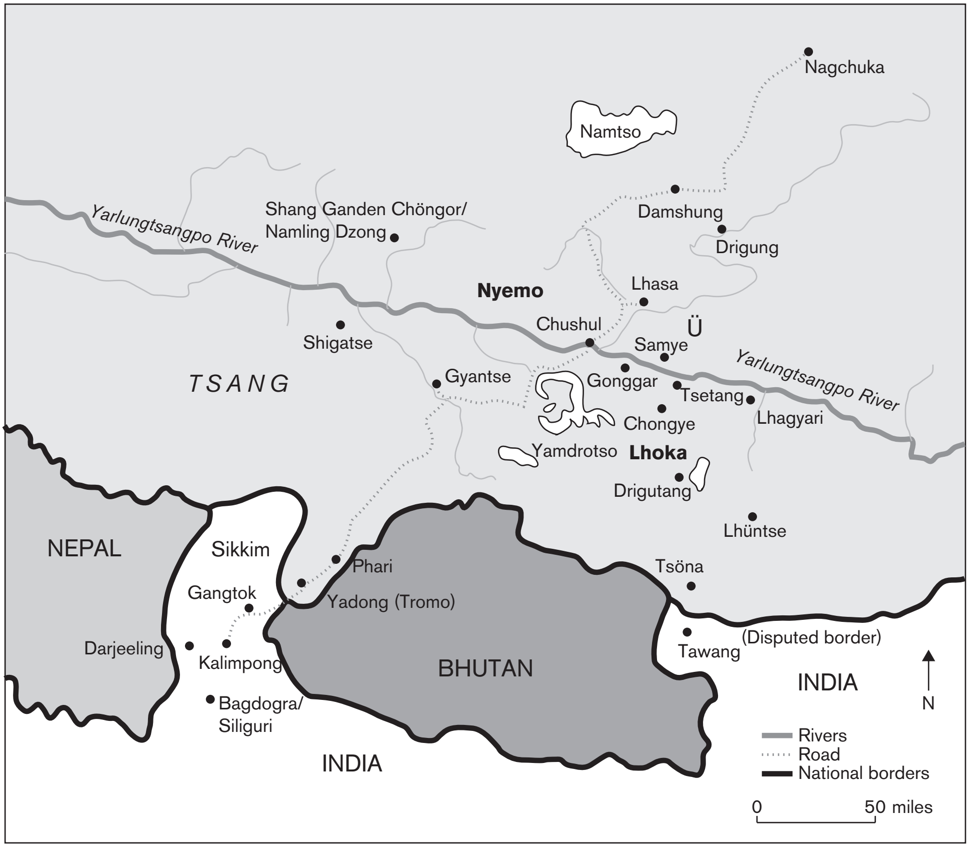
tsondzin	Non-combat officials in Chushigandru's Military Headquarters.
Tsuglagang	The main temple in Lhasa that is surrounded by the circular Barkor Road. The Jokhang is located within it.
Wang Qimei	A senior commander and official from the Southwest Bureau. He led the Advance troop of the 18th Army Corps to Lhasa in September 1951.
Xikang (Province)	The province immediately north of Sichuan that was predominately ethnic Tibetan (Khamba) in composition. It was merged into Sichuan in 1955.
Xi Zhongxun	A senior leader from the Northwest Bureau (Vice Chairman of the Northwest Military and Administrative Bureau) who was called to Beijing and became the Vice Premier of the PRC. Father of Xi Jingping.
Yadong	A town on the border with Sikkim. The place where the Dalai Lama fled to in 1950–51 after the Chinese took military control of Chamdo. In Tibetan it is called Tromo.
Ya Hanzhang	A senior official in Tibet in the early 1950s from the Northwest Bureau.
Yigtsang	The highest office in the monk official side of the Tibetan government. It was headed by four officials called trunyichemmo.
Yuthok	An aristocratic official who was an acting kalön in 1958–59.
Zhang Guohua	The top Southwest Bureau official in Tibet and the commander of the 18th Army Corps. He was also the first deputy secretary of the Tibet Work Committee in Lhasa.
Zhang Jingwu	Representative of the Central Committee to the Dalai Lama and first secretary of the Tibet Work Committee.
Zhou Enlai	The Premier of the People's Republic of China, 1949–1976.


Political Tibet
Afghanistan
Ethnographic Tibet
N. Korea
S. Korea
Qinghai
Tibet Autonomous Region
Chamdo
Sichuan
Lhasa
Dartsedo
Taiwan
Yunnan
465 mi
RUSSIA
MONGOLIA
Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region
Beijing
N. KOREA
S. KOREA
Xining
Gansu
Ladakh
Tibet Autonomous Region
Qinghai
Lanzhou
Nagchuka
Lhasa
Chamdo
Chengdu
Nyintri
Sichuan
New Delhi
NEPAL
Shigatse
Giamda
Powo
Dartsedo
BHUTAN
INDIA
Darjeeling
Kalimpong
Kunming
TAIWAN
BANGLADESH
Yunnan
465 mi
Calcutta
BURMA

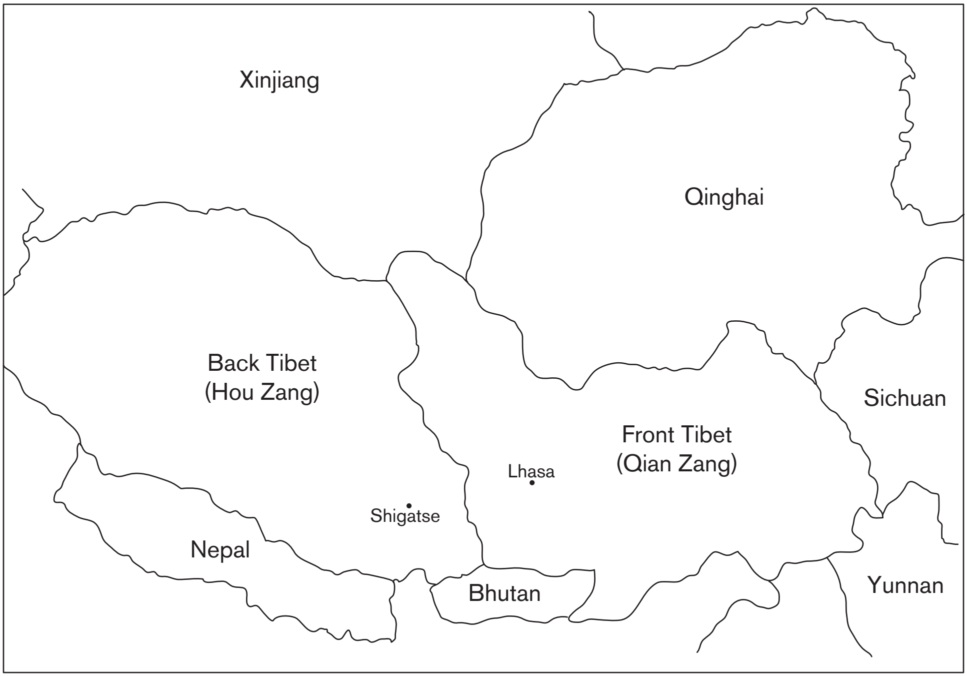
MAP 1. China/Tibet—political and ethnographic Tibet.


N
Nagchuka
Sateng
Khyungpo
Tengchen
Chamdo
Lake Namtso
Pembar
Shopando
Damshung
Lharigo
Lhorong
Drigung
Yangbojen
Reting
Shugpola Pass
Nyemo Kargang
Powo
Giamda
Shang Ganden Chöngor
Lhasa
Namling Dzong
Nyemo
Mashung
Nyintri
ü
Dokarsumdo
Tsetang
Riwodechen
Wuyuk
Chushul
Samye
Takdruka
Gonggar
Lhagyari
Yarlungtsangpo River
Pemakö
Nedong
Shigatse
Chongye
Gyantse
KONGPO
TSANG
Lake Yamdrotso
LHOKA
E Chundogyang
Drigutang
Lhuntse
Tsöna
SIKKIM
Contested border
BHUTAN
INDIA
Yadrong (Tromo)
Tawang
INDIA
Highway
Gombo Tashi's movements
Sites of battle

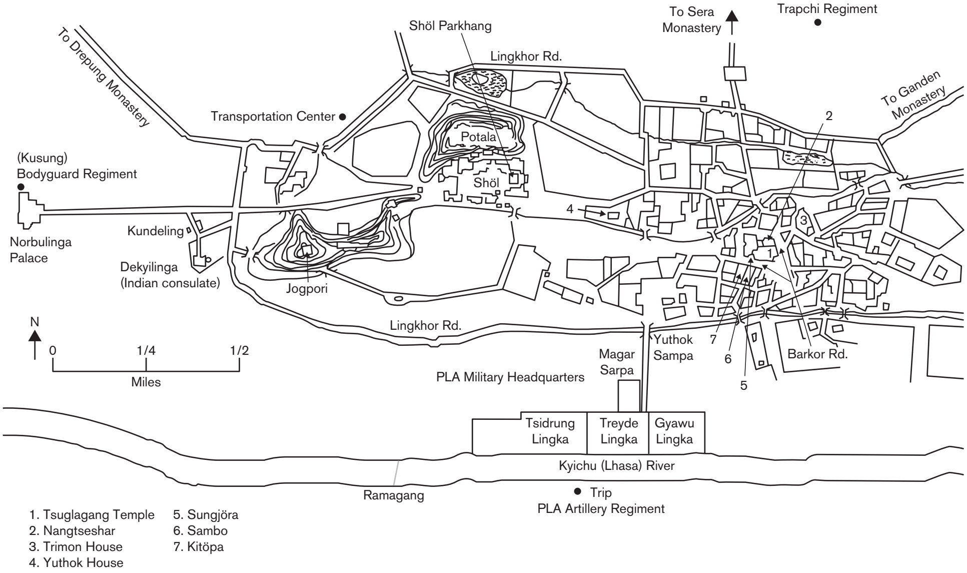
MAP 2. Battles of Gombo Tashi in 1958.


Nagchuka
Namtso
Yarlungtsangpo River
Shang Ganden Chöngor/
Namling Dzong
Damshung
Drigung
Nyemo
Lhasa
Chushul
Ü
Samye
Shigatse
Yarlungtsangpo River
TSANG
Gyantse
Gonggar
Tsetang
Lhagyari
Chongye
Yamdrotso
Lhoka
Drigutang
NEPAL
Sikkim
Lhüntse
Phari
Tsöna
Gangtok
Yadong (Tromo)
Darjeeling
Kalimpong
Tawang
(Disputed border)
BHUTAN
INDIA
N
Bagdogra/
Siliguri
INDIA
Rivers
Road
National borders
0
50 miles

MAP 3. The main route from Lhasa to India.


Xinjiang
Qinghai
Back Tibet
(Hou Zang)
Front Tibet
(Qian Zang)
Lhasa
Shigatse
Sichuan
Nepal
Bhutan
Yunnan

MAP 4. Tibet with Back Tibet and Front Tibet.


To Sera Monastery
Trapchi Regiment
Shöl Parkhang
To Drepung Monastery
Lingkhor Rd.
To Ganden Monastery
Transportation Center
2
Potala
(Kusung) Bodyguard Regiment
Shöl
3
4
1
Kundeling
Norbulinga Palace
Dekyilinga (Indian consulate)
Jogpori
N
0
1/4
1/2
Miles
Lingkhor Rd.
Yuthok Sampa
Magar Sarpa
7
6
Barkor Rd.
5
PLA Military Headquarters
Tsidrung Lingka
Treyde Lingka
Gyawu Lingka
Kyichu (Lhasa) River
Ramagang
Trip
PLA Artillery Regiment
1. Tsuglagang Temple
2. Nangtseshar
3. Trimon House
4. Yuthok House
5. Sungjöra
6. Sambo
7. Kitöpa

MAP 5. Lhasa city.

1

Introduction

Traditional Tibetan Society

History does not occur in a vacuum, even for powerful kings and rulers. While many believe that ultimately it is the leaders of countries—the “great men” of history—who make the decisions that becomes its “history,” the sociocultural, political, economic, and religious matrix in which leaders are embedded plays an important role in constraining, facilitating, accelerating, and impeding the policies that are and can be utilized. This matrix, therefore, is often as determinative of historical outcomes as the leaders themselves. This has been true in Tibet, where three major institutions—mass monasticism, the manorial estate system, and the theocratic-ecclesiastic political system—played a critical role in determining the history of Tibet from the start of the twentieth century, including in the 1950s, where one of the key issues in Sino-Tibetan relations was the timing and nature of “democratic reforms” that would transform those institutions.

MASS MONASTICISM

It is impossible to understand modern Tibetan history without exploring, at least briefly, the special nature of the Tibetan monastic system and its place in the Tibetan national identity and national psyche. Tibetans saw their Buddhism—monasteries, lamas, and monks—as the institution that defined the character of their nation and civilization. For example, in 1946, the Tibetan government conveyed this in a letter sent to Chiang Kai-shek that stated, “There are many great nations on this earth who have achieved unprecedented wealth and might, but there is only one nation which is dedicated to the well-being of humanity in the world and that is the religious land of Tibet, which cherishes a joint spiritual and temporal system."[1] The reference to the "well-being of the world" conveys aptly Tibetans' belief that the monastic system's organization of collective prayer chanting and other rituals functioned to benefit not just Tibet, but all sentient beings on the planet, and that this is what made Tibet a unique and great civilization in the family of nations. It was the heart of what we can think of as Tibetan "exceptionalism" that saw Tibetan Buddhism as a "civilizing project" that had converted the Yuan and Qing Emperors and had led Tibet to see its relationship to China as one of priest to patron.[2]

Monasticism is fundamental to both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhist philosophies and is found wherever Buddhism exists. However, the Tibetan form of monasticism differed from other types of Buddhism by virtue of its commitment to maintaining large numbers of monasteries in which tens of thousands of lifelong monks were recruited and supported, as well as by the unique Tibetan institution of incarnate "lamas"—enlightened spiritual leaders who served as the indispensable teachers/guides for learning and practicing Buddhism and for advancing on the path to nirvana.

The scale of the Tibetan monastic system was enormous and supported a staggering number of monks. The Chinese Military Headquarters reported that 14 percent of the Tibet Autonomous Region's whole population in 1958 were monks and nuns.[3] The magnitude of this can be appreciated by comparing it with Thailand, another prominent Buddhist society, where only about 1–2 percent of the total number of males were monks.[4]

Tibetans, not surprisingly, believed that monks per se were superior to laymen, and that the state should foster both religion and the spiritual development of the country by supporting monasteries and by making monkhood available to the largest possible number of males as a lifetime commitment. All celibate monks, even those who were functionally illiterate and only marginally involved in religious study and meditation, were considered superior to all laymen, because they had taken the critical first step in the Buddhist quest for enlightenment—they had taken vows of celibacy and renounced the attachment to sex, marriage, and family. Monks in Drepung Monastery often explained the essence of monks vis-à-vis

---

1. Goldstein 1989, 542–43. Tibetan National Assembly to Chiang Kai-shek, trans. Lobsang Lhalungpa, 1946.

2. For a discussion of "civilizing projects," see Harrell 1993. A contemporary example of the Tibetan civilizing project is the process I call "inverted acculturation" that is occurring in some parts of ethnic (Han) China, where the direction of acculturation is not from the dominant (Han) group to the subordinate (Tibetan) one, but the opposite, in the sense that Han Chinese are adopting Tibetan Buddhism. In China this is often called the "Eastern March of Buddhism" (Ch. zangmi dongjing). For a discussion of this, see Wei 2010.

3. DPRC. "Tibet Military Headquarters' report on population, 10 June 1958."

4. Tambiah 1976, 266–67.

laymen with a metaphor, saying "we monks are like sticks of incense in that we stand and fall by ourselves." Becoming a monk, therefore, represented the empirical proof of the success of Tibetan Buddhism, so more monks represented more success and more greatness. In the Tibetan monastic system, therefore, *quantity trumped quality.* Monasticism in Tibet was not conceptualized as the otherworldly domain of a minute elite, but as a mass phenomenon that brought as many people onto the path of enlightenment as possible, although within this, the subgroup of highly educated monks were also much prized and honored. In Tibet's great monastic seats, three, four, five, and even ten thousand monks resided in what were in essence monastic cities. Structurally, therefore, Buddhism in Tibet was characterized by what I have called "mass monasticism."[5]

This was achieved partly due to the nature of monk recruitment. In the Tibetan monastic system, the overwhelming majority of monks were placed in monasteries by their parents as children when they were between the ages of roughly seven and twelve, without particular regard to their personality or wishes. Being a monk, moreover, was not a temporary experience for young males, a rite of passage, as in Thailand, but rather was a lifelong commitment. Being a monk in Tibet meant becoming a part of an all-consuming, lifelong, highly esteemed alternative culture.

There were many reasons why parents made a son a celibate monk for life. For many, it was their deep religious belief that being a monk was a great privilege and honor and a calling that made parents proud. For others who were poor, it was that but also a culturally valued way to reduce the number of mouths to feed, while also ensuring that their son would never have to experience the hardships of the poor in rural villages. In other cases, parents made a son a monk to fulfill a solemn promise made to a deity to whom they had prayed to help cure that son when he was sick. In yet other cases, recruitment was the result of a tax obligation. Many monasteries had numerical targets, so when they fell below their target number of monks, the government authorized them to conscript young boys from their subject peasants. For example, a subject family with three sons would have to make the middle one a monk.[6] In virtually all cases, however, new monks were young boys, and joining a monastery was the decision of their parents.

Parents sometimes broached the subject with a son, but usually simply told the child of their decision. Officially, the monastery asked such young boys whether they wanted to be a monk, but this was just pro forma. For example, if a newly made child monk ran away from the monastery after a month or two, this would not result in his dismissal on the grounds that he did not want to be a monk. A number of monks told the author how at first they had run away from the monastery to their homes, only to receive a beating from their fathers, who immediately returned them to the monastery. The monks relating these incidents did not see this as abusive. Rather, they laughed at how stupid they had been at that time to want to give up being a monk. Tibetans generally felt that young boys cannot comprehend the greatness of being a monk; it was up to their elders to see to it that they had the right opportunities.

---

[5] Goldstein 2009.

[6] In Tibetan this is expressed as *phusum pharma* ("the middle of three sons").

However, since monks could leave the monastic order when they grew older, powerful mechanisms were needed to retain adolescent and young adult monks facing a life of celibacy. The monastic system was structured to facilitate this. A monk enjoyed high status, but an ex-monk was somewhat looked down upon. Also, the large monasteries generally did not place severe restrictions on comportment or expect educational achievements. Rather than diligently weeding out all novices who seemed unsuited for a rigorous life of prayer, study, and meditation, the Tibetan monastic system expelled monks only if they committed serious crimes like murder or engaged in heterosexual intercourse.[7] Moreover, there were no exams that novices or monks had to pass in order to remain in the monastery (although there were exams for higher statuses within the monk's ranks). Placing thousands of monks in a monastic community at a young age meant that many would have little interest or ability to study or meditate, and Tibet's great monastic centers accepted them along with the virtuoso scholar monks. Even illiterate monks were welcomed for fulfilling the vow of monkhood and for helping to do the work needed to maintain the monastery. As mentioned above, this made sense in Tibet, because the goal of monasticism was to enable as many males as possible to move along the path to spiritual enlightenment by cutting their attachments to family, children, and the material world. Monks used to convey the monastery's acceptance of this internal diversity with the apt saying, "In the sea there are frogs and fish."

In contrast, leaving the monastery posed important economic problems. Monks lost whatever rights they might otherwise have had to their family's farm when they entered the monastery. Monks who left the monastery, therefore, had to face the task of finding some source of income. They also reverted to their original status of belonging to a lord and were liable for service to their lord. By contrast, if they remained monks, their basic economic needs were met without their having to work too hard. All these factors made it both easier and more advantageous for monks to remain in the monastery.

The special status of monks was manifested also in the monasteries being treated as semiautonomous units within the Tibetan state, with the exclusive right to judge and discipline their monks for all crimes except murder and treason. This relative autonomy, however, did not mean that the monastic system was disinterested in the political affairs of the country. It was actually very concerned. The

---

[7] While Tibetan monasteries enforced heterosexual celibacy, homosexual sexual relations were generally overlooked so long as no orifice was penetrated.

Gelugpa monastic leadership espoused the belief that since the Tibetan state was first and foremost the supporter and patron of religion, the needs and interests of religion and monasticism should take primacy. The Dalai Lama and the rest of the government agreed with this in principle, but there was no unanimity on who was to determine what in fact was in the best interests of religion.

Since the monastic segment felt it represented the essence of religion, monastic leaders believed that the political and economic system existed to further *their* ends and that *they,* not the government, could best judge what was in the short- and long-term interests of religion. Thus, it was their religious duty and right to intervene whenever they felt the government was acting against the interests of religion. This, of course, brought them into the mainstream of political affairs and into potential conflict with the ruler and the government, which had to balance acting in the best interests of religion and the state.

Mass monasticism was extremely expensive and required a huge input of resources and funds year after year, so the control of resources and income was a major issue for the monastic system. For example, a monastery like Drepung with its ten thousand monks, provided tea with butter at least once a day to all its monks during the morning prayer chanting (Tib. mangja) ritual, and had to maintain tens of thousands of butter lamps and constantly make religious objects (Tib. tshog) from grain as well as maintain a complex cycle of prayer festivals at which food was often served to the thousands of congregated monks. Moreover, these monks had to be provided a salary in grain, and of course there were continual costs for the upkeep of the physical plant of the monasteries. All this was sustained predominately by the yields from monastic manorial estates. Consequently, for the monastic leadership, the manorial estate system was seen as absolutely integral to the continued sustenance of the monastic segment and thus the greatness of Tibet. The communists' democratic reforms, therefore, were seen as an existential threat to monasticism and the greatness of Tibet.

Another less well understood but important source of income for monasteries was money lending. Tibetan monasteries were the largest money lenders in Tibet, because they had numerous endowment funds that had been donated for the performance of specific rites. And just as with endowment funds in the West, the capital of those funds (usually grain) was maintained intact, and only the interest was used for the rites. This meant that every year the capital had to be lent out and interest collected to be used to fund the events. So here too, democratic reforms were seen as a threat to these lending activities and thus the viability of large monasteries.

Thus, Tibetan Buddhism and mass monasticism exemplified for Tibetans the value and worth of their culture and way of life, and the essence of their national identity. It is what they felt made their society and country unique and without equal. However, the reverse side of this strong belief in the superiority of the traditional system was a visceral rejection of new ideas. In the realpolitik world of the twentieth century, mass monasticism was a powerful, backward-looking force that blocked internal change and modernization. For example, the very important move to modernize Tibet that was led by Tsarong Shape and a group of young aristocratic officials under him in the 1920s, was quickly undermined and blocked as being a danger to the paramountcy of Buddhism.[8] Not surprisingly, as Tsarong had argued would happen, Tibet was left militarily, diplomatically, and technologically impoverished when it came face-to-face with the People's Republic of China in 1950.

THE MANORIAL ESTATE SYSTEM

At the heart of the traditional socioeconomic system was the institution of the manorial estate (Tib. shiga).

All of the arable land in Tibet was held by religious and aristocratic lords and by the government itself in the form of estates. Tibet's estates were roughly analogous to the manorial estates that characterized medieval England and Western Europe, in the sense that they were granted to lords by the ruler (the Dalai Lama), who was the functional equivalent of a medieval king. The Tibetan ruler had the right to confiscate such estates and occasionally did so, but in reality the estate holders possessed written titles and held their land hereditarily across generations. The Tibetan ruler also had the right to grant new estates, as he did for the families of new Dalai Lamas who were ennobled and became part of the lay aristocracy.

Tibet's manorial estates typically combined the means of production—economically productive land—with a captive labor force to work that land, a hereditarily bound peasant labor force (Tib. miser). The estate's land, as in Europe, typically comprised two sections—the lord's land and the peasant's land (called respectively in European feudalism, demesne and tenement land). The lord's land typically comprised about 60 percent of the total arable land on the estate and was cultivated entirely by the estate's hereditarily bound miser as a corvée obligation (Tib. ula); that is, as a labor tax with no wages. On most estates, the bound peasant families had to provide one worker *every day* to their lord, and two or more workers at peak agricultural times. If there was no agricultural work to be done, the lords had their corvée workers do other things, such as collect firewood or spin wool. All of the yields from the demesne land went directly to the lord.

The remaining 40 or so percent of the estate's land was allocated to the estate's hereditarily bound peasant families and was the means from which they derived their subsistence. They did not "own" this land in the sense of having the right to sell it, but normally held hereditary usufruct rights so long as their corvée obligations were fulfilled.

---

[8] For a detailed discussion of this modernization movement, see Goldstein 1989, 89–138.

The amount of required corvée work, however, fell on peasant families rather than individuals, and depended on the amount of tenement land the family held from the estate. Consequently, if a full tax unit of land (Tib. treden) required a family to send one worker every day, a family with only half a treden of land only had to send one worker every other day.

There were different kinds of estates and different types of bound peasants in Tibet. For example, while the estates of aristocratic and monastic lords were normally organized with demesne and tenement land, the estates held by the government typically distributed all the estate's land to its bound peasant families, who then had to provide larger taxes in kind plus a corvée transportation tax that involved providing carrying or riding animals on demand for the Tibetan government's transportation system. However, the defining feature of all types of estates was that the bound peasants did not have the right to return their land to the estate and seek their fortunes elsewhere. They were not free. They belonged to their estate hereditarily, and if they tried to flee from their estate, the estate lord had the right to pursue and forcibly return them (Tib. mitsa yüügaw), and they sometimes did. Legally, therefore, the Tibetan peasantry hereditarily belonged to estates ruled by lords and could not unilaterally terminate their obligations. A miser's linkage to an estate and lord was transmitted by parallel descent, i.e., a man's sons became subjects of *his* estate/lord, but his daughters became the subjects of her mother's estate/lord. If an estate changed hands, as occasionally happened, its miser remained attached to the land and became the subjects of the new lord of that estate.

The rights of lords over their miser were broad and included the power to unilaterally transfer them to other individuals, although this was not common in Tibet. There was no custom of lords selling their bound peasants. Aristocratic lords, however, did sometimes send one of their house servants (Tib. yogpo or nangsen) or landless subjects as "tax appendages" (Tib. trenön) to larger subject families that were having difficulty fulfilling their tax obligations because of a shortage of labor. Similarly, aristocrats sometimes sent one of their household maidservants as part of the dowry of their daughter when she went as a bride to another family, even if this meant breaking up the maidservant's family.

It is for this reason that these hereditarily bound peasants are often classified as a part of the broad cross-cultural category of *serf*." Although I believe that referring to the bound peasants in Tibet as "serfs" is heuristic, since it highlights the structural similarities between manorial estates in Tibet and early European society, and although I used the term *serf* in earlier books and articles, I have come to conclude that the term has become too politically toxic, so I will use the more neutral Tibetan term *miser* for such hereditarily bound peasants. We should not forget, however, that whether we call these peasants serfs or miser does not change the underlying reality of the Tibetan manorial estate system, namely that it was dependent on the corvée labor of hereditarily bound peasants.

Despite this structural rigidity, rural life at the grassroots level was simultaneously characterized by considerable flexibility. Lords were concerned exclusively with their estate's economic output—with transforming their land grants into an economically valuable resource by producing products. So beyond extracting the full measure of corvée labor and fees from their miser, lords were unconcerned with exercising control over the other aspects of their lives. How a peasant spent his or her non-corvée labor time did not concern them, and since the tax obligations actually fell on the family rather than on individuals, so long as the family fulfilled its corvée obligations, its individual members were free to do as they wished, including travel to other areas on a pilgrimage or for a visit to relatives or to trade. Being bound to an estate and lord, therefore, meant subjects were not free to unilaterally relinquish their corvée labor obligations by relinquishing their land. But in another sense, so long as all the obligations owed to the estate were performed when the lord demanded it, peasant households retained substantial individual freedom for day-to-day activities.

Finally, the fact that virtually the entire peasantry was hereditarily bound to an estate and lord did not mean that the peasantry was homogeneous in terms of standard of living and status. There were three main categories of miser.

i. A category of "taxpayer" or "treba" miser who held arable land from their estate had to provide heavy corvée labor to farm the estate's demesne land as well as typically provide corvée carrying animals.
ii. A category of miser called düjung ("small smoke") were also hereditarily tied to an estate and lord but did not possess arable land from the estate and therefore did not have to provide regular corvée labor to farm its demesne land, although they had some lesser obligations to their estate. They subsisted by working for taxpayer miser families or leasing small plots of land from taxpayer families or the estate itself.
iii. A sub-category of hereditary servants of lords called nangsen worked in the house of the lord 24/7 and received room and board but no wages.

Not surprisingly, the landholding taxpayer miser generally had a much higher standard of living than the düjung miser and servants, and the richer of these often worked as local officials in their districts. Consequently, being a miser—a bound peasant—did not mean poverty. Many taxpayer families were actually wealthy and had their own servants. It is interesting to note that Mao Zedong understood this complexity, saying in April 1959, "I think, the serf system in Tibet is just like the estate system in our Spring and Autumn Period [770–476 B.C.]. The serfs are not real slaves, they are not real free peasants, they are in a system that is in the middle."[9]

There was no regular custom of manumission in Tibetan society, but there was a common status called human lease (Tib. mibo) that enabled a miser to "lease" his physical freedom from his estate in return for the payment of an annual fee. For example, if a woman from one estate married a man from another estate and moved to his house on the other estate, she would remain a miser of her original estate, but could petition to receive "human lease" status, which was invariably granted. She and her daughters and their daughters, ad infinitum, would remain miser of her original lord and pay an annual fee to him (and sometimes do some work). Human lease status fees varied significantly in size and nature, but the fee was usually money. Lords kept detailed records of their subjects, including household births and deaths and annual human lease payments.[10] In essence, therefore, virtually the entire Tibetan peasantry was hereditarily tied to estates/lords either living directly on an estate or through "human lease" status.

The Tibetan political economy, therefore, not only provided elites with the critical resources they needed to maintain their lifestyles but critically made it easy to achieve this by guaranteeing them a "captive" labor force. From the lords' vantage point, this was an extremely efficient system that required them to spend very little in money or time. Lords did not have to compete for workers in a labor market, nor did they have to worry about the feeding, clothing, and housing of the workers as in a slavery system. Lords, whether incarnate lamas, monasteries, aristocrats or the government itself, needed only to supply a manager for the estate, whose main duty was to organize the hereditarily bound labor force and arrange for the shipment of the yields to the lords. The manorial estate system, therefore, was the main source of wealth for all Tibet's elites and the government, so was not something that could easily be dispensed with in the 1950s.

THE TIBETAN GOVERNMENT

The Tibetan government in the 1950s was a Gelugpa sect theocracy that consisted of a ruler, the Dalai Lama, who was an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, and a system of hierarchically arranged offices headed by the Kashag, or Council of Ministers.[11] These governmental offices were staffed by a bureaucracy of

---

9. Mao's speech at the Sixteenth Supreme State Conference, 15 April 1959. In *Mao Zedong Wenji* [Collected works], vol. 8, 1999. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe [People's Publishing House].

10. An examination of this institution is found in Goldstein 1971.

11. The Tibetan government was known in Tibetan as Dewashung or Ganden Phodrang. The dual governmental system was called chösi nyiden or chösi sungdrel, which literally means "religious and secular joined together."

roughly five hundred full-time officials, about half of whom were monk officials and half aristocratic. Virtually all government offices, including all district heads (Tib. dzongpön), were jointly held by a lay and a monk official sharing equal power. Tibetans, therefore, considered their country and political system as unique by virtue of its complete fusing of the secular with the religious.[12]

The lay officials in the government were recruited from a hereditary aristocracy that consisted of about two hundred families. Each aristocratic family held at least one manorial estate with its attached miser families, and in return was required to send at least one male family member to serve as a government official (with no salary). Serving the government as a lay official was technically an obligation, but in reality was a carefully guarded prerogative. With the exception of the families of the successive Dalai Lamas and a very few others, in the twentieth century nonnobles did not become lay government officials.

The other half of the bureaucracy was the segment of monk officials. It was about the same size as the aristocratic official segment, but the officials were all Gelugpa monks who were recruited from a select number of (Gelugpa) monasteries around Lhasa (e.g., Sera, Drepung, Ganden, Muru, Shide). In theory, recruitment to this segment occurred by conscription. When the number of active monk officials got too low, the government instructed the relevant monasteries to send a certain number of young monks to Lhasa to be trained as monk officials in a government school called the Tselabdra, which was located in the Potala Palace. This school taught basic bureaucratic skills such as Tibetan calligraphy, (the cursive script that was not taught in monasteries), grammar, poetics, and arithmetic. These monk officials were, of course, required to be celibate monks and wore monklike uniforms, but once they became regular monk officials, they were not "normal" monks in the sense that they did not reside in their original monasteries and were not active in their monastery's routines. For example, they did not participate with regular monks in the joint prayer chanting meetings or other rituals that so characterized monastic life.

Becoming a monk official was also an important path for upward mobility; it was actually common for rich trader or craftsmen families in Lhasa to try to make one of their sons a monk official by nominally enrolling him in an appropriate monastery, educating him at one of the private schools in Lhasa, and then using influence to get him admitted to the Tselabdra school or directly into the monk official ranks. Similarly, the same procedure was used by the households (Tib. shag tshang) of monk officials and rich monks to secure acceptance for a member of their household such as a nephew or a disciple/student as a monk official. So while the monk official segment clearly represented the interests of mass monasticism and consisted of Tibetans whose class backgrounds were nonelite, they became part of the elite when they became monk officials. Moreover, there were also monk officials from aristocratic families who, though numerically few, disproportionately held high positions in the monk official hierarchy. For example, the Dalai Lama's powerful lord chamberlain in the 1950s was from the important Phala aristocratic family, and the Kashag member in 1950 who was a monk was from the Ramba family.

---

[12] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 2004, H.0019.08. English uncorrected.

The ruler, the Dalai Lama or, during his minority, a regent, officially had ultimate authority over all decisions and appointments and, theoretically, all recommendations for action had to be submitted to him for approval.

The line of Dalai Lamas was recruited by incarnation, in other words, after a Dalai Lama died, Tibetans believed that he chose his successor by incarnating his "essence" into the fetus of a boy (normally within a one- to three-year period after his death). The method of finding the successor Dalai Lama, therefore, involved the Tibetan government and the new Regent launching multiple search teams to different regions in Tibet to try to identify that correct boy from the tens of thousands of boys born within the period of a few years of the Dalai Lama's death. They narrowed down the areas to search by first examining dreams, visions, miraculous events and the like to find clues where to search, and then sent several teams of lamas and officials to investigate births in those areas that were said to be accompanied by exceptional events such as rainbows in the sky. All potential candidates were visited incognito in situ and were "tested" by showing the boys pairs of items—one personally used by the late Dalai Lama and another that was identical, but new. The correct child was expected to choose the things the previously Dalai Lama had used, not the new and shiny ones. The search team members also carefully observed these boys to assess whether they were alert and bright. When several candidates were identified, these were brought to Lhasa for further testing, and ultimately the next Dalai Lama was chosen. From then on, he lived in his palaces and studied religion with his tutors. This elaborate system of selection functioned effectively to legitimize the selection process and transfer the charisma of the previous Dalai Lama to the new incarnation, although there were sometimes disagreements over who was the "true" candidate.[13]

The new Dalai Lama assumed power only at age eighteen, so structurally there was a long minority period when Tibet was ruled by regents, who in modern times were Gelugpa sect incarnate Lamas. Once a Dalai Lama assumed power, he held it for the remainder of his life. However, how much actual control over decisions and policy the Dalai Lama exercised depended on his personality, values, and skill in dealing with the bureaucracy.

---

13. For a discussion about the disagreement over the incarnation of the Fourteeth Dalai Lama, see Goldstein 1989, 333.

One of the most circumscribing factors for the Dalai Lamas was their physical isolation from virtually everyone in the kingdom. The Dalai Lama was cloistered in his palaces and had no informal contact outside of those immediately around him in his "court" (see below). The Dalai Lama, therefore, was dependent on information coming to him from other offices like the Kashag, from those in his immediate court, and for the 14th Dalai Lama, from those who did manual labor in the palace such as sweepers. It actually took an active effort on the part of a Dalai Lama to overcome this institutionalized isolation.

Due to the Chinese invasion, the 14th Dalai Lama came to power young, in 1950, at only age 15, and he had a very different and gentler personality than his predecessor, who was famous for having a strong and decisive personality and had ruled autocratically.

Once when I asked the 14th Dalai Lama about whether he looked to the 13th Dalai Lama as a model for his reign when he came to power, he emphatically said no and then explained that he was more spontaneous, whereas the 13th was more taciturn and calculating.

> Q. So you must have thought that when I am the ruler, can I follow his [the 13th Dalai Lama's] model or if I am not comfortable with that, I want to do something else?
>
> A. But my nature. What nature comes it is spontaneous. I do that. Never sort of calculate. But Trijang Rinpoche told me, today a new period [circumstances], not only the Chinese, but in any case, sort of a new time [a new era], and your personality is very suitable for this. This is a new era and the 13th Dalai Lama's personality does not fit it, but during his period, his personality was useful. Once he told me like that. Even if I felt [that] I wanted to act like the 13th Dalai Lama, I couldn't have done it at all. But Tarala [an important monk official who later was the head of the Dalai Lama's Private Secretary's Office in exile], could I have done it? The previous Dalai Lama was reserved (Tib. gambo), and taciturn (Tib. bugbu), et cetera, [so] could I have done like that? [Tara said "no."] If one doesn't have that personality, a person's personality is important. Without a personality, one can't do it. Tarala, he is more like 13th Dalai Lama.[14]

On another occasion the Dalai Lama shed additional light on his personality, when he told the author about an incident with the lay official Namseling during a tense time in late 1958 when Namseling was about to depart on a mission to Chushigandru headquarters. "So one day Tsipön Namseling . . . came to see me. [He said to my attendant] Söpön Khembo that he was concerned that Gyawa Rinpoche [His Holiness] is too ngotsa mimbu [is someone who cannot say no] . . . so he might give in to the Chinese, and then he cried."[15]

---

[14] 14. Dalai Lama, interview, India, 2004, H.0019.08.

[15] 15. Ibid. Ngotsa minbu is difficult to translate but basically refers to a person who is sensitive or shy and has difficulty saying no.

So while the structure of government was important, the personality of the ruler was also very important. The 14th Dalai Lama, therefore, was not going to be the type of autocratic ruler that the 13th was.

The Dalai Lama's main source of information and advice came from what we can think of as the Dalai Lama's "court." There was no single term for this, but a former Kashag minister referred to it as the "simjung thagor" or "those who were around the Dalai Lama's living quarters."[16] In the 1950s, this "court" consisted of a small number of monks, lamas, and monk officials. These included his three chief personal monk attendants,[17] his senior and junior tutors who were incarnate lamas (Tib. yongdzin), his debating tutors (Tib. tsenshab), and government monk officials who served the Dalai Lama in his Secretariat office (Tib. Tse ga), which met in his Summer or Winter Palace, wherever the Dalai Lama was residing.

One of the most important of these officials was the Jigyab Khembo. He was the highest monk official and was in charge of the Dalai Lama's personal treasuries (the dzöbu and dzöchung). He could also sit with the Kashag, The other major monk official was the lord chamberlain (Tib. drönyerchemmo) who was the head of the Dalai Lama's Secretariat Office under whom there were eight or more subordinate monk officials called tsendrön, who functioned basically as aides for the lord chamberlain.[18] Although the lord chamberlain was lower in rank than the Jigyab Khembo, he was typically more influential, since he was supposed to inform the Dalai Lama on all issues and matters and then carry out his decisions or relay them to the Kashag. He was also the main conduit to the Dalai Lama for such things as private petitions and requests for audiences. In the 1950s, this was particularly so, because Lord Chamberlain Phala, Thubden Wönden was tough and competent, and well-connected because he came from a very prominent aristocratic family of the same name who had made one of their sons a monk official. Consequently, the lord chamberlain was a critical influence on the opinions and decisions of the ruler. The current Dalai Lama commented on Phala's role:

> At that time, Lord Chamberlain Phala was very capable, right? He was often called by the Kashag and then he comes to me and tells me and says such and such was done and he brings the plans and if there is any correction to be done, then Chemmo (the Lord Chamberlain Phala) will give his recommendation. At that time [from 1957–59], the Jigyab Khembo was Gadrang, [but] Chemmo was much more active than him.[19]

---

[16] Lhalu, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0002.01.

[17] These were the chief attendant for food (Tib. söpön khembo), the chief attendant for clothes (Tib. simpön khembo), and the chief attendant for rituals (Tib. chöpön khembo).

[18] The Dalai Lama's Secretariat also had four "guards" called Singga, all of whom were monk officials, as well as an office staffed by monk officials called the Nangmagang, or Private Secretary's Office.

[19] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1993, H.0019.01.

As will be seen in later chapters, in the 1950s Phala played another important role; he was operating a covert anti-Chinese organization in Lhasa and assisting the anti-Chinese resistance elements in India and the Khamba insurgents in Lhoka Province *without the Kashag's knowledge or approval.* As such, he wielded a great deal of influence on the Dalai Lama and on events in the 1950s.

When I asked the Dalai Lama about how he obtained information, he said,

> Of course the Kashag and the Yigtsang; these are official sort of bodies, so [these were] formal sort of communication, but the information [about] what was really going on, yes, there was the Tse ga [Secretariat]. The Drönyerchemmo was one source of information and then the Jigyab Khembo. And then, in my case, since my childhood I was very fond to talk and listen to views of the sweepers and the debating tutors and the attendants or some Gönyer [caretakers of chapels], all those people whom I am acquainted with no matter what their rank or background, I always ask their opinion. For example, in 1950 regarding my leaving [Lhasa] to go to Yadong, I asked the opinions of some sweepers and the tutors. I always used to ask them, so even when I became the real ruler, they always spoke to me without reservations. It was useful. *The only thing [with them] is that their knowledge was very limited.* Later some bodyguard [regiment] officers like gyagbön [head of one hundred troops] or some jugpon [head of ten troops], also were a source of some information.[20]

The relationship between the Dalai Lama and the Kashag, the highest office in the Tibetan government bureaucracy, was an important factor in the Dalai Lama's decisions in the late 1950s. The Dalai Lama's structural isolation was exacerbated by the tactics of the Kashag, which traditionally consisted of four kalön (ministers), one of whom was a monk official. In modern times, this number was not strictly adhered to, and in 1951, for example, there were eight (full and acting) kalöns.[21] Kalöns were appointed by the ruler for life from a short-list of nominees prepared by the Kashag itself. And although the ruler was not limited to choosing from the Kashag's list, he normally did so.

The Kashag was the administrative center of the Tibetan government for secular affairs and also functioned as the Tibetan equivalent of a paramount court of appeals. It was the only office that could send secular items to the ruler for approval and, therefore, was the only secular office that had direct contact with him. All other secular offices had to go through the Kashag to obtain a decision from the ruler. The Kashag also was responsible for making nominations for appointments and promotions (of lay officials). Supporting the Kashag was a small staff of six or seven junior aristocratic officials.[22]

---

[20] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 2004, H.0019.08. English uncorrected.

[21] The five full Kashag ministers were Ramba (monk official), Surkhang, Ragashag, Lhalu, and Ngabö. The three acting ministers were Thubden Ramyang (monk official), Shasur (Shenkawa) and Dombor.

[22] These aides to the Kashag were two kadrung, two kandrön, and three Kashag shöba.

Under the Kashag, there was a hierarchy of bureaucratic offices that handled the business of government. Most were headed by both monk and lay officials, but the two most important, the Revenue Office (Tib. tsigang) and the Ecclesiastic Office (Tib. yigtsang) were headed by four lay officials (Tib. tsipön) in the former case, and four monk officials (Tib. trunyichemmo) in the latter. The Ecclesiastic Office dealt with religious affairs and the government's monk officials, and the Revenue Office, which was more accurately the Accounting Office, was in charge of accounting (Tib. tsigyag) for the taxes in-kind collected from the dzongs (districts) and government estates. It had nothing to do with money per se.

Traditionally, there were no portfolios in the Kashag, and decision-making was done collectively with consensus required for action, although not all Kashag ministers had to be present for decisions. The dominating power of the Kashag was based on the fact that no secular matter could reach the ruler for final approval without first passing through its hands, and the Kashag had the authority to make emendations on petitions for action from lower offices before they went to the Dalai Lama. Tibetans, therefore, often spoke of it as the throat through which all governmental matters must pass.

A hypothetical example will illustrate how recommendations to the Dalai Lama for action were framed. This hypothetical petition was sent from the head of a district (Tib. dzongpön) to the Revenue Office, to the Kashag, to the Dalai Lama, then back to the Kashag, and from there back to the Revenue Office and finally to the district in question.[23] In Tibet, the Kashag and Dalai Lama used different colors of ink, so it was immediately clear to a reader which emendations each had made on a petition for action. For the purpose of illustrating the different inks, in the following example, the Kashag's emendations are in brackets and the underlining and crossings out reflect the Dalai Lama's decision:

> It was examined (by me the Dalai Lama) on the 5th day of the 9th month of the wood-tiger year [Wood-Tiger year]. A report has arrived from the Gyantse district head. This year because of heavy rains, the fields of the people of Samada have become covered with water and they were not able to harvest a crop. Based on the great difficulties caused by that [which others have no means for imitating] after doing their corvée taxes, for three four five years we are requesting a concession of taxes in kind. [and on top of that, to make up for the loss, ~~silver coins 200, 250, 300~~ and barley khe[24] 70, 80, 90 to be given as a gift].
>
> Please instruct whether it is all right or not to do this.[25]

As is seen in this example, the Kashag's style of submitting proposals for action to the Dalai Lama was to write it in the form of a final decision that was coming from him. Thus, the first sentence of this petition indicates that the Dalai Lama (or in his minority, the Regent) examined the request on such and such a date, and the final sentence indicated his approval or disapproval.

---

[23] This example was constructed by former Kashag Minister Surkhang Sawangchemmo.

[24] A khe was a traditional volume measure equivalent to about 31 pounds (for barley).

[25] Goldstein, 1968, 175–76.

The Kashag, in this example, had first altered the Revenue Office's recommendation by adding the phrase "*which others have no means for imitating*" and the phrase "*and on top of that, to make up for the loss, silver coins 200, 250, 300 and 70, 80, 90 khe of barley to be given as a gift.*" The Dalai Lama, however, chose to cross out the recommendation that there should be a payment in silver coins, and chose that *70 khe be given as a gift* as well as *a tax concession of five years.*

This hypothetical example reveals some of the basic ways that the political system restricted the Dalai Lama (or Regent). For example, in the above incident, the Dalai Lama only knew what was in the Kashag's letter, since he did not get the earlier petition(s) that the Kashag had received from lower offices or any other correspondence the Kashag had with the district about this. And since the decision of the lower office to provide assistance was supported by the Kashag, he would almost always leave the basic notion intact, in this case to provide them some assistance, even though, as he did here, he might alter some points within the decision. And although the Dalai Lama could summon the Kashag for a meeting in person to discuss major issues, and in the 1957–59 period met with the Kashag weekly, he was still limited by only knowing what they told him.

In addition, the Dalai Lama was also constrained because of the Kashag's long-established practice of unilaterally settling many issues without first sending these to the ruler. This was possible because the Kashag's seal was the official government seal. Even items that went to the ruler for approval were issued with the Kashag's seal. Consequently, in cases when the Kashag did not send an issue to the Dalai Lama for approval, it simply wrote the decision as if it had already been seen by the Dalai Lama and then sent it out for implementation using its seal.[26]

The Kashag's internal rationalization for bypassing the ruler was usually that an issue was too inconsequential to bother the sacred ruler, or alternatively it was an issue that dealt with matters unsuitable for an incarnate lama, for example, decisions that ordered corporal punishment. However, there were several clear-cut types of issues that the Kashag normally would not withhold from the ruler. These included: (l) decisions that involved the expenditure of government funds, (2) decisions that involved the transfer of land from one owner to another or confiscations/awards of land, (3) decisions granting permanent tax exemptions or adding new taxes, (4) promotions and demotions, (5) decisions involving border relations and foreign affairs, *and in the 1950s, decisions regarding the Chinese.*

---

[26] The Kashag's seal was called kadam. The Dalai Lama had his own seal called bugdam, which he used to issue decrees in his own name.

The late Kashag Minister, Kalön Surkhang, estimated that in the late 1940s, about 70 percent of incoming requests were settled by the Kashag without the approval of the ruler. In the government's six-day workweek, he estimated that there were about one hundred pieces of business that the Kashag sent to the ruler for final confirmation. As one would predict, Surkhang indicated that the percentage of items approved unilaterally by the Kashag increased considerably during the reign of a regent and a new Dalai Lama, and decreased during the era of a strong Dalai Lama. However, in the history of the institution of the Dalai Lama, there were only a few who were able to exercise extensive autocratic power. The 13th Dalai Lama, who was one of these, compensated for his isolation by recruiting his own informal spy network to report to him what was being talked about and going on in Lhasa.

The Dalai Lama spoke a little about how he interacted with the Kashag:

> Q. When the Kashag makes a decision on something, do they then tell you something verbally first and then send you something written on which you have to check which alternative you want?
>
> A. In some cases, they sent something on paper and in some cases we sat down and discussed it and decided. In dealing with the Chinese, most issues were discussed just verbally, but in official declarations or edicts it was on paper.
>
> Q. When they spoke with you, was it a kind of a meeting where they came and said we think you should do this, or did they come and say that Ngabö says I think you should do this and Thubden Ramyang says I think this would be better? Was it where everybody said different things and then you said something?
>
> A. Sometimes.
>
> Q. Usually?
>
> A. Usually they first discussed it among themselves and when they reached a consensus, then they came to see me. But sometimes if they said there were different opinions or a disagreement, then I would ask them individually what were the differences.[27]

The Kashag, therefore, controlled the daily operation of the government and was the critical link between the ruler and the bureaucracy. Moreover, after Tibet's incorporation into China, it also was the government office that dealt directly with the Chinese officials in Lhasa.

However, in the 1957–59 period, although the Dalai Lama was just 22–24 years of age and had no informal spy network, he was not inexperienced and did exercise his authority over the Kashag, especially with finalizing issues concerning the Chinese. He had already been ruling for seven years and had made two major trips, one to inland (Ch. neidi) China/Beijing and one to India, during which he had discussed important political issues with top leaders like Mao Zedong and

---

[27] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 2004, H.0019.08.

Prime Minister Nehru.[28] And while in India, he also had held extensive discussions about political issues and options with his two anti-Chinese older brothers, Gyalo Thondup and Taktse Rinpoche, who were living in exile in Darjeeling and America respectively.

The Kashag's control over the Tibetan governmental bureaucracy, however, was lessened intermittently by the appointment of officials to the Office of the Silön (Prime or Chief Minister), a position that was meant to function like the ruler when the Dalai Lama had to be absent from Lhasa for an extended period of time.

The Silön or Sitsab

The Office of Silön was created in 1904 when the 13th Dalai Lama fled to exile in Mongolia/China as a result of a British invasion of his capital. At that time the Dalai Lama appointed three Kashag ministers (kalön) to govern in his absence, calling them Silön, which literally means "minister over political administration." Unlike regents who ruled after the death of a Dalai Lama and during the minority of the successor Dalai Lama, these Silön were in charge of the country when the ruler was alive but in exile. However, when the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa from India in 1913 to resume his authority, he chose not to dismiss the Silöns, so they formed a new layer in the bureaucratic hierarchy that sat between the Kashag and the Dalai Lama. The Kashag, heretofore the highest office in the government, then had to send all its petitions and decisions to the ruler via the Silön, who exercised the same power over the Kashag's requests as the Kashag did over the other governmental offices subordinate to it.

After the death of the 13th Dalai Lama in 1933, an incarnate lama, Reting Rinpoche, was selected as regent, and the office of Silön quickly disappeared.[29] However, in December 1950, the Dalai Lama appointed two Acting Silön (called Sitsab) to oversee regular governmental affairs in Lhasa when he and the kalöns fled to Yadong on the Indian border to wait to see whether the Chinese would continue their invasion into Central Tibet.

The (National) Assembly or Tsondu

In addition to the set of governmental offices, the Tibetan political system also had several types of assemblies (Tib. tsondu). These assemblies typically consisted of various combinations of government officials, representatives of the great Gelugpa monastic seats near Lhasa (mainly the abbots and ex-abbots of Sera, Drepung, and

---

[28] The term neidi ("inland") China was used in Tibet after it was incorporated into China to refer to the rest of China outside of Tibet, since it was politically awkward for Tibetans to talk any more about going from Tibet to China. In other contexts, it was also used to denote "mainland" China, e.g., vis-à-vis Taiwan.

[29] See Goldstein (1989, 333–40) for a detailed account of this event.

Ganden Monasteries), and sometimes representatives from the lower stratum such as clerks. The assemblies met irregularly at the request of the Kashag or Dalai Lama to consider and give opinions on a specific question supplied to it by the Kashag, although by tradition, the Kashag ministers did not themselves participate in the assembly discussions or even attend the meetings. Although these assemblies are often called National Assemblies in the literature, they could not initiate action, nor could they determine administrative action. Rather they were consultative and were convened basically to broaden the base of support for some sensitive or difficult decision that the Kashag or Dalai Lama did not want to make unilaterally. Whether nor not their advice was heeded and converted into policy depended on the Kashag and the ruler. However, the presence of the powerful monastic abbots and ex-abbots representing the three great monastic seats with their twenty thousand monks influenced the Kashag and Dalai Lama's decisions on important issues.

It was for these reasons that Tibetans viewed their joint religious-secular governmental system that was committed to an ideology of mass monasticism as the validation of their belief in Tibet's religious exceptionalism. And it was into this conservative, religion-dominated society and government that the Chinese Communists arrived in 1950–51 and set out to incorporate (re-incorporate in their view) Tibet into the People's Republic of China.

2

Historical Antecedents

In 1949–50, Tibet's traditional world began to unravel. From 1913, when the 13th Dalai Lama returned from exile in India after the fall of the Qing Dynasty and resumed his position as ruler, Tibet operated as an independent polity with its own laws, currency, army, taxes, border controls, and governmental bureaucracy. The successor governments to the Qing, under Sun Yat-sen, Yuan Shikai, and Chiang Kai-shek, *played absolutely no part in ruling Tibet*, although they claimed that Tibet was part of China. They were too weak to enforce their claims due to internal conflicts, the Second Sino-Japanese War, and then the Civil War with the communists. Their claim, however, was successful in the international arena, because the relevant democracies such as Great Britain, India, and the United States chose not to recognize Tibet's independence, despite having dealt directly with Tibet independent of China for years. Instead, for their own economic and geopolitical reasons, they accepted China's suzerainty over Tibet within which Tibetan was autonomous. This suzerainty, however, had no reality on the ground, where Tibet continued to operate as a de facto independent polity between 1913 and 1951.[1]

Sino-Tibetan relations, however, entered a new phase after WW II, when Mao's Communist Party began to defeat the armies of Chiang Kai-shek in the Chinese Civil War. By January 1949, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had taken Beijing, and soon after that, Chiang Kai-shek and his top Guomindang (Nationalist) Party officials fled to Formosa. This was followed on 1 October 1949 by the inauguration of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

---

[1] The history of Tibet from 1913 to 1951 is examined in depth in Goldstein 1989.

Much like the previous Chinese governments, the new communist leaders of China considered that Tibet had been part of China and set as an immediate priority the incorporation—in their view the reincorporation or "liberation"—of Tibet into China. Nationalism played an important part in this decision, because one of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s core goals was to unify all parts of what had been "China," and to make the new China a great nation again.

However, for Mao and the Party's Central Committee, there were important strategic and geopolitical goals. Tibet shared a border with India, Nepal, and Bhutan in excess of 1,800 miles, and had its closest and friendliest foreign relations with India (or before Indian independence in 1947, with the British rulers of India). Tibet had also begun to develop an international identity through the British in India and had sent an official trade mission to the United States and Britain in 1948. In addition, most of Tibet's trade and commerce was conducted not with China, but with India or via India; for example, Tibet's exports of wool to the United States were sent via Kalimpong in India. British India also maintained governmental mission offices in Lhasa and other towns such as Gyantse and Yadong, which the government of India inherited and operated after Indian independence in 1947. Furthermore, because the Tibetan government had been unable to establish modern schools in Tibet due to monastic opposition, many Tibetan aristocratic families sent their children to English schools run by missionaries in Kalimpong and Darjeeling. And on top of everything else, whereas Tibetans considered India positively as the holy land of the Buddha, they had an extremely negative opinion of China's communist/atheist ideology.

Because of this, from Beijing's vantage, to not incorporate Tibet was strategically problematic, since an independent Tibet would almost certainly have friendly relations with India and the United States / Britain, but not with China. A clear indication of the Tibetan government's thinking about future relations with Communist China occurred on 8 July 1949, when the Tibetan government notified the head of the Guomindang (GMD) mission office in Lhasa that he and his officials were being expelled and had two weeks to leave Tibet. The Tibetan government also expelled about three to four hundred other Chinese living in Tibet who were suspected of being spies. This decision was made out of concern that some or all of these Chinese officials would switch allegiance to the new Chinese Communist government, allowing it to claim that they had an office and officials in Lhasa.[2]

Thus, allowing Tibet to continue as a de facto independent polity would most likely have negative strategic implications for China, because if China were not controlling Tibet, it was not unlikely that India or Britain or the United States would be involved in influencing Tibet's policies vis-à-vis China. There was no reason not to think that this would include providing military and technical support and also helping to incorporate Tibet more fully into the international community. This would be strategically untenable, so when the People's Republic of China was inaugurated, it immediately called for the "liberation" (incorporation) of Tibet.

---

[2] See Goldstein 1989, 613–14.

Mao, however, understood that because Tibet was a feudal-like theocracy that had been ruling itself independently since the fall of the Qing Dynasty and had been functioning for several hundred years before that with its own laws and government as a loose protectorate under the Qing Dynasty, its leaders were not likely to agree to becoming part of the atheist and communist new Chinese state. Mao also understood that Tibet was actively trying to secure diplomatic and military support from the enemies of Communist China like the United States and Britain, and had secretly purchased modern weapons from India in 1947 and 1949 for its army. So he decided that China needed to incorporate Tibet quickly in 1950, because the longer the wait, the more likely it was that America, Britain, India, or the United Nations would become involved.[3] To achieve this incorporation, Mao utilized a "carrot and stick" tactical approach and a nuanced "gradualist" policy.

Based on Tibet's past history and the current international situation, Mao decided it would *not* be in China's long-term interests to incorporate Tibet by pursuing the most straight-forward and quick method: ordering the PLA to march to Lhasa and, after forcibly taking control of Tibet, implementing the kind of socialist land reforms (Ch. tugai) that were being imposed in China and that would similarly destroy the landlords and the elite and end Tibet's traditional society and government. Mao could certainly have accomplished that, for at that time China's population was about 540 million and the PLA not only had more than 2 million troops in uniform[4] but was well-equipped with American weapons that it had captured from Chiang Kai-shek. By contrast, Tibet's population of 1.2 million was defended by a small army that was poorly trained and led, and whose total size was only about thirteen thousand to fifteen thousand (plus perhaps another few thousand in the militia). Meanwhile, in contrast to the Tibetan army, which was untested in battle, the PLA was a battle-hardened fighting force that had just finished demolishing the American-supplied army of Chiang Kai-shek. Consequently, the PLA almost certainly could have accomplished the military incorporation of Tibet if ordered to do so in 1950.

However, sending the PLA to conquer Tibet risked significant negative consequences. Tibet was as large as Western Europe and was situated at extreme high altitudes in a very cold and rugged terrain that was without a single motor road or airport. Dispatching an invading army of, say, 40,000–50,000 troops on foot with their equipment across the Tibetan plateau would have been extremely challenging logistically. For example, the distance from Qinghai Province to Lhasa was approximately 1,200 miles and from Sichuan Province to Lhasa was about 1,600 miles, and it would have taken an army about 4 or 5 months marching on foot to cover the distance. Consequently, supplying such an army as it moved further and further away from China, would have required many tens of thousands of transport yaks and mules to ferry supplies from Qinghai and Sichuan, week after week and month after month.

---

[3] See Goldstein 1989, 619–22 for a discussion of the arms purchases and other attempts at preparing for a confrontation with China.

[4] Guillermaz 1976, 165.

In addition, although the small Tibetan army defending the Sino-Tibetan border was no match for the PLA face to face, if the Tibetan government ordered its troops to adopt fallback guerrilla warfare tactics, they would likely have been able to inflict significant losses on the PLA and its supply convoys through ambushes, and perhaps even significantly disrupt the PLA's supply lines. And given that Tibet already had an international identity of sorts, a slow and bloody invasion with the Tibetan army's guerrilla forces fighting the PLA mountain pass by mountain pass might have motivated America and other enemies of Communist China in the international community to support Tibet diplomatically and even militarily, transforming what Mao wanted to be a quick internal affair into an international issue that might have ended up being brought before the United Nations, where Chinese claims to sovereignty over Tibet could have been challenged.

A drawn-out and bloody invasion would likely have had another negative consequence. Mao wanted Tibetans gradually to come to accept being part of China in a positive manner. Consequently, a long-drawn-out campaign with many Tibetan casualties and damage to monasteries, villages, and towns could have left a legacy of anger and hatred toward the PRC over and above the basic estrangement of having been incorporated and occupied against their will into Communist China. Actually, the Tibetan government had no such guerrilla plan, but Mao did not know that for sure.

Because of such factors, the main focus of Mao's Tibet strategy was to achieve a negotiated incorporation, or what the Chinese government called "peaceful liberation" (Ch. heping jiefang, Tib. shiwei jingdrü). As such, while the PLA was instructed to make plans to invade and occupy Tibet as soon as possible, this was to be utilized only if Mao was unable to persuade the Dalai Lama to send representatives to Beijing to negotiate Tibet's future as a part of China. Mao, therefore, proceeded with full steam to secure "peaceful liberation," offering very favorable terms to the Dalai Lama if he would agree to Tibet's incorporation into the PRC but threatening to use the PLA to invade Tibet if he did not.

The history of Beijing's campaign to persuade the Dalai Lama to start "negotiations" is complex. It will suffice to say here that the Tibetan government responded to Mao's various overtures calling for talks basically by stalling and looking for help from the international community. As time passed and no Tibetan negotiators arrived, Mao faced a dilemma—how long should he wait? Winter at high altitude on the Tibetan Plateau would make invading Tibet exponentially more difficult, so as October 1950 neared, Mao decided he couldn't wait any longer and gave the order for the PLA to attack the ten thousand or so Tibet army troops and militiamen who were defending the Sino-Tibetan border, which as mentioned previously, was the Upper Yangtse River. That invasion, which started on 7 October 1950, was a well-planned and effectively executed blitzkrieg-like attack from three directions. The Tibetan army was hopelessly outmatched; after a two-week campaign, the PLA surrounded and captured almost the entire Tibetan army, including Ngabö, the Kashag minister who was the governor-general of Tibet's Eastern (Chamdo) Province. The road to Lhasa was now open to the PLA, but, since Mao's priority was to secure a peaceful agreement of incorporation with the Dalai Lama and his government, he ordered the PLA not to continue to advance toward Lhasa, while he renewed his call for the Dalai Lama to send a delegation to discuss Tibet's incorporation into the PRC.[5]

The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government were completely opposed to becoming part of China, let alone a communist-ruled, atheist China, so after the loss of Chamdo, they moved the Dalai Lama from Lhasa to Yadong (Tromo, in Tibetan), a small town on the Tibet side of the Indian (Sikkim) border, from where he and his top officials could easily escape to safety in India should the PLA continue its advance to Lhasa. They also organized official delegations to India, Nepal, and several Western countries like the United States and Britain to seek military aid and help to get their case brought to the United Nations. Tibetans, however, quickly found that the countries they thought were friends, like Britain, refused to even accept these missions, while the UN refused to hear its case about Communist China's invasion of its country. So in Spring 1951, the Dalai Lama reluctantly sent representatives to Beijing to discuss the terms of an agreement, while he remained waiting in Yadong.

The destruction of the Tibetan army in Chamdo showed the Dalai Lama convincingly the power of Mao's "stick," but since Mao had prioritized achieving a "peaceful liberation," he needed to persuade the Dalai Lama to reject fleeing into exile to India and opposing China from there. Mao's "carrot" did this in the famous "Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Liberation of Tibet" that was signed in Beijing on 23 May 1951 by Tibetan and Chinese government representatives. Mao offered the Dalai Lama very generous terms, given that the Dalai Lama only had a few thousand troops left and no external diplomatic support. China would allow the Dalai Lama's government to continue to administer Tibet internally using its own officials and laws, while at the same time, China agreed not to implement socialist reforms until the leaders and masses in Tibet were ready to accept these. This meant that Tibet's vast monastic segment and the manorial estate system would continue

---

5. All of this is examined in detail in Goldstein 1989.

as before, as would the positions and wealth of the elite. This was a major concession, because in the Han areas of China, the CCP immediately implemented land reforms that did away with the landlord class by confiscating their land and wealth and redistributing these to poor peasants. In addition, they destroyed the stature and authority of the elite in the minds of the masses through the use of public meetings called "struggle sessions" (Ch. pidou hui; Tib. thamdzing), at which the former landlords and elites were humiliated, beaten, and sometimes even killed by the masses who confronted them about their "crimes" and abuses.[6]

Under the new Seventeen-Point Agreement, China would assume control of the borders of Tibet and its relations with foreign countries, but the day-to-day administration of Tibetans would continue to be done by the Dalai Lama and his government with their own laws. The price for this was that the Dalai Lama had to accept Chinese sovereignty and agree to allow Chinese troops and officials to "peacefully" occupy Tibet. And, of course, as a part of China, the Tibetan government, now referred to as the "local government" (Tib. sane sishung), would have to work cordially and cooperatively with the Chinese officials in Tibet to implement the agreement and be part of the Chinese state. Mao's strategic goal was to integrate Tibet harmoniously into the new Chinese state by working to develop friendly and cooperative relations with the Dalai Lama and his elite so as to *gradually win them over* to see themselves positively as a part of China, and over time, accept the need for reforms. Mao and the Central Committee, therefore, had made a strategic decision to relegate their usual ideological priority of "freeing the 'serfs'" and "destroying the landlord class" to the back burner, while promoting the pragmatic goal of winning over the Dalai Lama and the elite to the front. Tibet would have to reform itself at some point in the future, but no time frame was specified in the agreement for when this would occur. In the meantime, the Dalai Lama would continue to operate with a high degree of internal autonomy and with the traditional society intact. This was Mao's "gradualist" policy for incorporating Tibet. It sought to create gradually a new, peaceful, and cooperative Tibet that was comfortable with being a part of the PRC by winning over the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan elite, followed by the masses. To affect such a transition from Tibet's status as a de facto independent nation would have been such a tremendous strategic victory for China that it was considered to be worth the risk of leaving the Dalai Lama and the old system in place for years to come in order to give Mao's gradualist policy a chance to succeed.[7]

---

[6] Goldstein 2014.

[7] At this time, Mao and the Central Committee had concluded that it was not possible to win over the rural Tibetan masses who they considered were too devoted to lamas and religion to be susceptible to propaganda urging them to rise up against their "exploitation." So while some Chinese work teams went out into villages, they normally only offered interest-free loans, talked about the Seventeen-Point Agreement and showed movies and shows, but they were not allowed to teach about class warfare (Dorje Tseden, interview, Beijing, 1993 [H.0074.02]).

The issue of when Tibet should undergo reforms and change was addressed in point 11 of the agreement, which said, "In matters related to various reforms in Tibet, there will be no compulsion on the part of the central authorities. The local government of Tibet shall carry out reforms of its own accord, and *when* the people raise demands for reform, they shall be settled by means of consultation with the leading personnel of Tibet."[8]

The Tibetan negotiators viewed point 11 positively, because it stipulated no specific timetable for starting reforms and left that decision up to the Tibetan elite and masses. For Tibetans, this was interpreted to mean that no major changes would occur soon, because they did not believe that the Tibetan government and people would "raise demands for reforms" any time in the near future. However, because point 11 used the term *when,* not *if,* point 11 indicated that China did not accept what is now called a One Country, Two Systems arrangement, so at some point Tibet would have to reform its traditional society. However, because the term *when* had not been operationalized in any way in the negotiations, the question of how much change and how fast—in five years or fifteen years or fifty years—was left open, and it became one of the core contested issues in the years after 1951.

After a copy of the terms of the Seventeen-Point Agreement was sent to the Dalai Lama in Yadong, a major debate ensued. Many of the top officials there tried to persuade the Dalai Lama to renounce the agreement and go into exile, where he would lead an international movement to oppose Chinese rule in Tibet. The United States was also urging the Dalai Lama to not return to Lhasa. However, another segment agreed with the views of the Tibetan representatives in Beijing, who argued that because the agreement allowed the Dalai Lama's government to continue to administer Tibet internally, it offered the Dalai Lama the best hope of preserving Tibet's extraordinary Buddhist civilization. Their arguments carried the day, and in the summer of 1951, the Dalai Lama and his officials returned from Yadong, as did a Chinese government representative (Zhang Jingwu), who had been sent via India to Yadong together with several of the Tibetan negotiators. Not long after this, Chinese troops and officials arrived in Lhasa, beginning a new chapter in Sino-Tibetan history.[9] The Dalai Lama's theocratic government and the atheist Communist Chinese government would now move from agreeing to incorporation in words to implementing those words in day-to-day actions and interactions according to the Seventeen-Point Agreement.

---

[8] The official Tibetan translation for the phrase, "*when* the people raise demands for reforms was, "mi dmangs nas legs bcos byed dgos zhu *dus*" (emphasis added). Note that rather than use the term for land reforms, "sa zhing bcos bsgyur" (Ch. tugai), with all that it implied, the term "legs bcos," which is the generic term for any kind of "reform," was used. The Tibetan and Chinese language versions of the agreement used in this book were taken from https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Agreement_of_the_Central_People%27s_Government_and_the_local_government_of_Tibet_on_Measures_for_the_Peaceful_liberation_of_Tibet (accessed 11 April 2019).

[9] For detailed examination of the negotiations about the agreement, see Goldstein 1989, 698–814.

Mao's gradualist Tibet policy, however, was only part of his overall Tibet policy. He and the Central Committee understood that winning over Tibetans would be very difficult and that there would be Tibetans, "reactionaries" in their view, who would continue to see China as an occupying force and strive to oppose Chinese rule, for example, by trying to secure foreign assistance to force China out of Tibet. And in a more general sense, in the end, it might not be possible to win over the Dalai Lama. Mao's Tibet policy, therefore, from the start, had a secondary, or last-resort, component—the use of the military. The gradualist policy was the primary and preferred strategy, but if it failed and, for example, Tibetans revolted, Mao's plan was to retain Tibet as an integral part of China by using the PLA to destroy the rebels and reactionaries, wipe out the traditional manorial estate system, end the Tibetan "local" government, implement forced reforms and quickly create a socialist Tibet under the direct control of the CCP. Mao's gradualist Tibet policy, therefore, was a calculated risk that was one part of a win-win strategy for China. *The end result under either the preferred gradualist strategy or the last-resort military strategy was going to be the same in one sense—Tibet would be reformed and fully integrated into socialist China.* However, how long China would or should wait for Tibetans to come around was an unsettled issue. Sooner was better than later, but since the long-term attitude of Tibetans toward being part of China would obviously differ greatly depending on which of these two pathways was implemented, Mao and the Central Committee chose to go slowly, so pursued the gradualist approach as the Party's priority.

Mao's Tibet policy, however, had another essential component—stabilizing the Chinese position in Tibet by building motorable highways that would link Tibet to inland China so as to secure China's ability to supply its military and civil personnel. A crash program was launched immediately to construct two east-west motor highways, one between Lhasa and Qinghai and another between Lhasa and Sichuan. Both of these were completed in three years and opened in December 1954. An airport and a series of secondary motor roads in Tibet were completed in 1956.

In keeping with Mao's gradualist policy, Chinese troops and officials in Lhasa presented themselves to Tibetans as a new breed of Chinese who had come not as exploiters, but as friends to help Tibetans develop Tibet and improve their standard of living. The PLA soldiers were instructed to treat Tibetans with respect and to maintain strict discipline in their interactions with local Tibetans, even in the face of provocations. A Chinese cadre in the TWC recalled:

> We were not allowed to go to market recklessly. Sometimes when we had to go out, we often ran into humiliations. Some people spit on us and came to hit with their

> fists. We said nothing and just wiped out our faces. The reason for tolerating this was the hope of leading them on a good path (winning them over).[10]

On the Tibetan side, there were two very different approaches to dealing with the Chinese. The Kashag, as the leading traditional office in the Tibetan government, assumed the responsibility of interacting directly with the Chinese in Lhasa, working through the Party's main office, the Tibet Work Committee (TWC) (Ch. Xizang gongwei). The Kashag's strategy was pragmatic. They set out to develop and maintain cordial relations with the Chinese with the goal of retaining as much of Tibet's internal autonomy and traditional institutions as possible. The Dalai Lama recalled that Ngabö told him, "The Central Government already accepted the Tibet case as something unique, special. So we must utilize that right. I don't remember the precise words Kalön Ngabö said, but the meaning was that."[11] Lhalu, another kalön at that time, explained further,

> We were defeated and we couldn't handle the People's Liberation Army. So the view of the Kashag was slightly calm and was to make good relations with them."[12] [For example,] Kalön Shenkawa always used to say, "If we show our full face, they will also show their full face, and if we show them only half of our face, they will also show half." This meant that if we showed a good attitude toward the Chinese, they would in turn also show us a good attitude. Otherwise, they wouldn't be good. . . . He was implying that we should take the initiative [Tib. rang 'gul] [and act like this]. . . . He used to always say this. So he wanted to have good relations with the Chinese. . . . The others [kalön also] . . . thought that it would be beneficial to establish good relations [with the Chinese].[13]

The kalöns, however, realized that Tibet would not be able to remain unchanged going forward, so their strategy was to implement changes but only very slowly, and to implement only relatively minor reforms at first. Lhalu explained, "I didn't think that the old society could continue. But I also didn't think that it would vanish at once. I thought that reforms would occur slowly, over time. For example, if there were five points, we should implement one each year, not all at once. I didn't think we should implement all the points at once. If we did it very slowly, I thought it would be fine."[14]

However, when the kalöns returned with the Dalai Lama from Yadong, they found themselves outranked by the two Sitsab (acting prime ministers) who had been appointed as internal caretaker "rulers" while the Dalai Lama was staying in Yadong. This turn of events had tremendous significance, since Lukhangwa, the lay Sitsab, had a totally different strategy for dealing with the Chinese than the kalöns did.

---

[10] Li Zuomin, interview, Beijing, 1993, H.0053.02.

[11] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 2004, H.0019.08. The special treatment was a signed agreement and internal autonomy.

[12] Lhalu, interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0002.01.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

Lukhangwa, from the start, had been against sending representatives to Beijing to negotiate, arguing that it would be better to have the meeting in Lhasa where he was, since Tibet would get better terms if the talks were held on Tibetan territory. However, he was overruled by the Kashag and Dalai Lama, who were handling all the important national issues from Yadong. He felt his fear of having the negotiations in Beijing was realized when he learned that the agreement would allow a large number of Chinese troops and officials to stay in Lhasa. The main PLA force of about six thousand troops from the Second Field Army arrived in Lhasa on 26 October under the command of Zhang Guohua. A month later, another twelve hundred troops from the First Field Army in Qinghai arrived on 1 December 1951 under the command of Fan Ming.

Lukhangwa strongly opposed this. He had thought that if Tibet had to be part of China, it should revert to something akin to the very loose protectorate status that had previously existed under the Qing Dynasty, where there was just a Manchu commissioner and a small garrison of troops in Lhasa. So he wanted to revise the agreement and send most of the PLA troops home. The Dalai Lama commented on his thinking, "[When] I returned from Yadong, regarding the opinion of the two Sitsab about consulting the Chinese, the two Sitsab were hoping that although the Seventeen-Point Agreement was signed, further, more detailed, discussions could be held in Lhasa."[15] However, the Sitsab decided that the best way to accomplish this was to refuse to respond positively to the Chinese and to challenge and confront them in an angry and adversarial manner, especially regarding arranging for the PLA troops to purchase grain and other basic supplies like fuel. And since they outranked the kalöns, their views prevailed, and the Kashag had to remain silent at meetings.

The Chinese, however, expected the Tibetan government to help them, since the Seventeen-Point Agreement specifically mentioned this in point 16, which says: "The local government of Tibet will assist the PLA in the purchase and transport of food, fodder, and other daily necessities."[16] Lukhangwa, however, saw provisions as an opportunity to apply concrete pressure on the Chinese by insisting that Tibet was very poor and did not have enough food to feed all these Chinese troops, so China should send most of them back. In one infamous argument, Lukhangwa sarcastically asked the PLA commander, "Is it not harder to go hungry than to be defeated in battle?"[17]

Lukhangwa's hostile attitude and angry behavior was so unusual that the head of the Indian Mission in Lhasa, S. Sinha, commented on it in one of his monthly reports to Delhi, “The Prime Ministers [Tib. Sitsab] habitually oppose and resent all advice and suggestions that come from the Chinese irrespective of their merits.”[18] Consequently, since the Sitsab would not arrange for enough grain to be sold to the Chinese, the Chinese had a very difficult time initially. One PLA soldier in the Dance Troupe recalled:

---

[15] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 2004, H.0019.08.

[16] Cited in Goldstein 2007, 249.

[17] Zhang 1983, 212. This comment became well known among Tibetans, many of whom also mentioned it.

> When we PLA soldiers first arrived, we didn’t have much grain and no rice or barley to eat. At this time [Kalön] Ngabö . . . and Tsarong sold us black beans (Tib. trema) and that is what we ate. We had no fuel to roast these and no mills to grind them, even if we could have roasted the grain. So we ate boiled beans for half a year.[19]

The situation became so desperate that some troops took to eating wild foods, for example, a Chinese soldier explained, “We were all starving. . . . Once we dug up a kind of plant with a round root, like a potato, and since we were hungry, ate it. But it was poison, so some people had to be immediately sent to the hospital.”[20]

The new Sino-Tibetan era, therefore, started off in Fall 1951 with confrontation and arguments between Lukhangwa and the Chinese over food and other items in the agreement, such as merging the Tibetan army into the PLA and starting a Military-Administrative Committee. Moreover, since the Chinese bought whatever they could find from the market or from individual families, this quickly created shortages and led to serious price inflation for grain and other foodstuffs, which hurt the residents of Lhasa economically.

Exacerbating this tense situation between the Sitsab and the Chinese was the emergence in late 1951 of an anti-Chinese Tibetan “People’s Party.” Although Tibetan politics traditionally was the prerogative of a tiny elite of lay (aristocratic) and monk officials, and was not the concern of its subjects,[21] the arrival of thousands of Chinese officials and troops led to the emergence—for the first time in Tibetan history—of an organization of nonelite Lhasa residents whose aim was to influence political affairs independently of the government. Called the “Mimang Tsondu” (“People’s Association/Assembly/Party”),[22] it was not only anti-Chinese and anticommunist but also critical of the Tibetan government, mainly the Kashag, which it felt was weak in dealing with the Chinese.

---

[18] Cited in Goldstein 2007, 188.

[19] Jambey Gyatso, interview, Beijing, 1993, H.0060.01.

[20] Cited in Ji 1993a: 395–96.

[21] On major issues, the abbots (and ex-abbots) of the three great monasteries around Lhasa (Drepung, Sera, and Ganden), as well as a few nonelite Tibetans such as government clerks and leading craftsmen, also participated in the full National Assembly meetings that were convened occasionally to discuss major issues such as the selection of the 14th Dalai Lama and the approval of the Seventeen-Point Agreement, or for difficult issues like what to do about the Khamba rebels in Central Tibet. Nevertheless, in reality, the common people had no say in political affairs.

[22] It has been called a number of related names in Tibetan, such as mimang tsondu, mimang tsogpa, mimang thrötsog, or Chundru mimang thrötso. All of these basically mean People’s Association or Assembly, or in the case of the final name, the People’s Association of the Water-Dragon Year (1952).

The founders of the People's Association knew and approved of the tough anti-Chinese attitude of the two Sitsab, whose verbal rebuffs to the Chinese generals had spread widely by word of mouth. They also knew about the importance of the concept of "the people" (Tib. mimang) in communist ideology. In late November of 1951, probably with covert prompting by Lukhangwa and/or other anti-Chinese officials such as Namseling, some nonelite Lhasa residents from the middle class decided that they should help support the Sitsab with a petition conveying the Lhasa "people's" wishes about reducing the number of troops.[23] In doing so, they created the first large-scale involvement of a heretofore unpoliticized segment of Lhasa society. And although political dissidence was not traditionally permitted in Tibet, the Sitsab's open opposition to the Chinese had provided an ideological green light for this kind of political protest.

The emergence of the People's Association helped to further fan the flames of the anti-Chinese resentment in Lhasa and led to increasing incidents—posters, street songs, pushing and shoving Chinese, and spreading negative rumors about the Chinese during the months of November 1951 through March 1952. An entry in the chronology of the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet from late November 1951 commented on this as follows:

> After the entrance into Lhasa [of the PLA], the upper strata reactionaries were centered around Lukhangwa. The masses were instructed to create troubles and shouted slogans such as, "PLA don't just go home, starve first and then leave hungry."[24]

The increasing frequency and severity of these anti-Chinese activities led the Chinese to visit the Dalai Lama in person to try to persuade him to put an end to them. The Dalai Lama recalled this in his autobiography:

> One day he [Zhang Jingwu] came to see me and demanded that I issue a proclamation banning any criticism of the Chinese, whether in songs or on posters, since these were 'reactionary' activities. However, despite new laws prohibiting opposition to China, notices began to appear in the streets denouncing the presence of the Chinese forces. A popular resistance movement was formed.[25]

---

[23] Namgye Wangdü, interview, India, 1993, H.0020.01. These representatives of the "masses" were actually a numerically small category sometimes referred to in Tibetan as "those in the middle" (Tib. badzalaga). This middle stratum was composed primarily of administrators and managers who worked privately for the elite—for monasteries, for the labrang of incarnate lamas, for aristocratic families, and even sometimes for government offices, so while they were not part of the elite, they were also not part of the masses.

[24] Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui, 1990, entry for 25 November 1951.

[25] Dalai Lama 1990, 73.

The Tibetan government, however, took no action to rein in the People's Association and the protests they sponsored. By mid March 1952, the Chinese were angry and nervous, and fearing an outbreak of fighting, began fortifying their positions in Lhasa and temporarily closed their cadre's Tibetan language school, as one of its students recalled,

> The [Tibetan] teachers in the cadre school were people loyal to the state [meaning China] so they were sent letters to scare them. These letters said that you teachers are devils,[26] and we will kill you one day. Moreover, when these teachers went to the market, some people threw stones and spit at them and told them to stop teaching at the school immediately. I recall seeing one of our teachers crying under a tree. He told the students that from today on I cannot come to teach you because my safety is at risk and there is a danger to my life. So for the time being I can't come. . . . Because of this we had to stop the school for a while. I was a student and I returned to the . . . Tibet Military Headquarters.[27]

A young Tibetan in the PLA also recalled that when they closed the school he returned to the Chinese military base and worked at preparing fortifications. He said that he and his colleagues slept in their clothing so they would be ready in case of an attack.[28]

The specific goal of the People's Association was to support the Sitsab by presenting a formal petition to the Chinese authorities in the name of "the Tibetan people" to remove all or most of the thousands of Chinese troops and officials residing in Lhasa. It was delivered in person by about twenty association leaders to Zhang Jingwu, the leader of the Chinese in Lhasa, on 30 March. They were not sure how the Chinese would react, so a large number of their members hung around outside of the Chinese headquarters to help in case their representatives were detained. However, although the Chinese did not detain them, many in the crowd remained around the headquarters, so the Chinese worried that they might try to attack them and actually asked the Kashag to have two kalöns stay overnight in their headquarters so they would be available to talk to the masses should they try to attack.

By the spring of 1952, therefore, the combination of growing inflation, the Sitsab's hostile attitude and intransigence, and the People's Association's protest activities had created a volatile and dangerous situation in Lhasa where some incident between the people and the Chinese could get out of control and erupt into serious violence. At this point, all of the kalöns met with the Dalai Lama and advised him that he needed to dismiss the Sitsab.

---

[26] In Tibetan: dü.

[27] Yang dpyi kran 1986, 75–76.

[28] Jambey Gyatso, interview, Beijing, 1993, H.0060.01.

> A. The entire Kashag came. I think mainly, I can't remember clearly, but logically I think the main speaker was Ngabö, then perhaps Shasur also commented that it would no longer be useful to have them, although they appreciated their determination and loyalty.
>
> Q. Did they give any specific reasons?
>
> A. They were clashing with Chinese. And if we do that it was clear that we can't handle the Chinese.[29]

Consequently, the Dalai Lama asked the Sitsab to resign on 27 April, and thereby restored the Kashag to its original status and authority. Their more cooperative and outwardly friendly approach quickly calmed the tense Sino-Tibetan relations in Lhasa and restored the relative cordiality between the Tibetan government (the Kashag) and the Chinese, with both sides trying again to work within the guidelines of the Seventeen-Point Agreement.

The Dalai Lama and the Kashag/Tibetan government, therefore, reaffirmed the fundamental decision it had made in 1951 to eschew going into exile to oppose Chinese rule in Tibet and return to Lhasa to cooperate with China under the Seventeen-Point Agreement. Tibet's strategy for the future was to work to carve out an acceptable place for Tibet within China that would preserve the essence of Tibetan culture/religion and a high degree of internal autonomy for the Dalai Lama and his government.

The Dalai Lama commented on this.

> Ngabö and Shasur . . . realized that the position of the Sitsab would lead nowhere—that it had no future. The Chinese were already there—this just confrontation, it was no use. So now they, even Shasur, said now the position of the two Sitsab was too extreme and will not benefit us. We have to make closer relations with the Chinese. Ngabö also felt this, but this was not necessarily some kind of sympathy with the Chinese at that time. . . .[30]
>
> By then the situation was such that we were already in their hands. So now all there was to do was to be diplomatic and friendly. There was no possibility to be obstinate. At that time the two Sitsab were being very stubborn. That I remember clearly. At times the two Sitsab, the Kashag, and the Chinese met together. At times only the Kashag [met with the Chinese]. When the two Sitsab, the Kashag, and the Chinese met they almost always sort of ended up in a fight. So in this manner, in 1952, Zhang Jingwu said that the two Sitsab must resign.[31]

Unbeknownst to the Tibetan side, within the Lhasa TWC, there existed a serious difference of opinion regarding policy as well. Fan Ming, the senior official in the TWC from the Northwest Bureau/First Field Army (see figure 1), opposed the gradualist approach, being convinced that the Dalai Lama (and his elite) would never voluntarily relinquish their own wealth and power, and that they were simply being duplicitous in acting cordial toward the TWC in order to dupe Mao into not starting reforms. The gradualist policy, he felt, would never have the results Mao wanted, and it was dangerous to leave the reactionary elite in power in Tibet since they were secretly plotting to split Tibet from China. Fan Ming believed that reforms should be implemented as soon as possible to preclude the elite from being able to organize serious opposition, as well as to end what he saw as the oppressive social system in Tibet.

---

[29] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.06.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1993, H.0019.01.

Fan Ming's plan for accomplishing this was to make use of Tibet's second greatest lama, the Panchen Lama. He was strongly pro-Chinese, was also a "progressive," and critically, was a kind of protégé of Fan Ming and the Northwest Bureau. This important relationship is discussed in detail in chapter 7. Fan Ming's plan had two parts. Part one was to persuade Beijing to divide Tibet into two equal autonomous regions, one headed by the Panchen Lama and one by the Dalai Lama. Part two was to persuade the Panchen Lama to declare it was time to start democratic reforms on the estates in his region and start their implementation. Fan Ming believed that when the masses in the Dalai Lama's area saw that the Panchen Lama's peasants got their own land and no longer had to perform corvée labor and other obligations for their lords, they would demand the same from the Dalai Lama, and he would have to agree. Tibet, therefore, would undergo democratic reforms quickly. Fan Ming's opponents, however, saw this as a loosely disguised form of forced reforms that would negate the possibility of achieving the goals of Mao's gradualist policy.

When Fan Ming's ideas were not accepted in the TWC, he escalated his efforts and tried to persuade Beijing to implement his approach. This conflict within the TWC in Lhasa continued without resolution until Mao finally stepped in to maintain his gradualist policy by having the Central Committee convene a major meeting of the TWC leaders from both sides in Beijing in October 1953. This meeting, discussed in chapter 7, reaffirmed Mao's gradualist policy as well as the Dalai Lama's supremacy in Tibet and the Panchen Lama's subordination to him. This incident is illustrative, because it reveals the considerable effort Mao was willing to undertake to ensure that the opposition to his gradualist policy was stopped.

In keeping with Mao's gradualist policy, Beijing invited the Dalai Lama to visit inland China in 1954 to meet China's top leaders and attend the First National People's Congress (NPC). He agreed and was accompanied by a group of his top officials. As would happen again in 1959, many officials and residents in Lhasa strongly opposed his going, fearing the Chinese would treat him shabbily and demean his stature, or worse, that the visit was really a ploy to get the Dalai Lama to Beijing, after which the Chinese would not let him return to Tibet. The Dalai Lama, however, disagreed strongly. He was anxious to see China and meet its

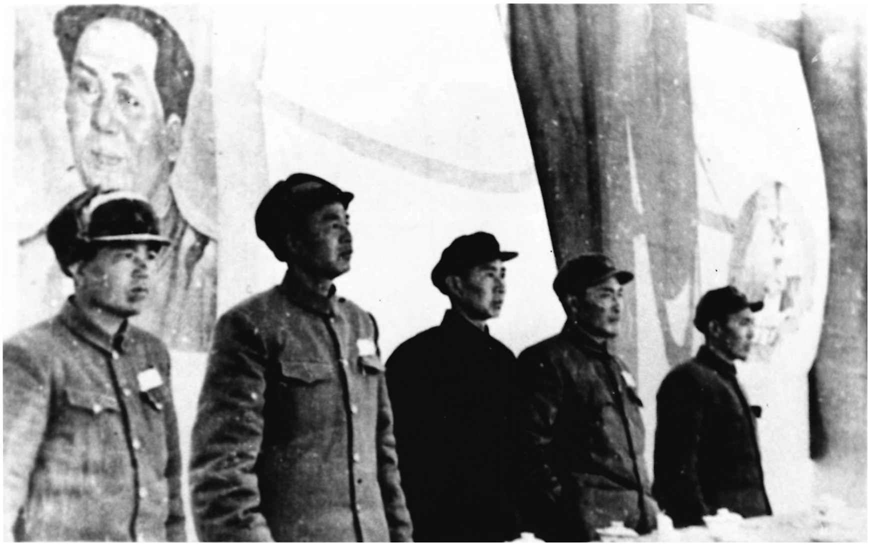


FIGURE 1. Some leading officials of the Tibet Work Committee, *left to right*: Mu Shengzheng, Fan Ming, Zhang Jingwu, Zhang Guohua, Tan Guansan. Courtesy of Fan Ming.

leaders, so he rejected such fears and went. The Dalai Lama's visit was a tremendous success and he returned after almost a year.

While in inland China, the Dalai Lama and his entourage were treated with great respect and cordiality by China's leaders, including Mao. This was the Dalai Lama's first visit to a "modern" country with roads, trains and planes, and factories, and he was deeply impressed by China's progress, and by comparison, Tibet's material backwardness. Surprisingly, he was also deeply impressed by the communist ideology of helping the poor and saw that as compatible with Buddhism's ideology; he actually asked whether he could become a Communist Party member. He was politely dissuaded.

During this visit, Mao raised several significant issues that were in the Seventeen-Point Agreement but that the Kashag had previously refused to implement, such as starting a Military-Administrative Committee and merging the Tibetan army into the PLA. Mao suggested to the Dalai Lama that the idea of creating a Military-Administrative Committee be discarded in favor of a Tibetan Autonomous Region, and the Dalai Lama liked this idea. The neologism used to translate the term "autonomous region" into Tibetan was "rang gyong jong," which literally translated as "a region ruled by itself," so he and his top officials agreed to start to organize a Tibet Autonomous Region when they returned. While in Beijing, the Dalai Lama also agreed to merge the Tibetan army into the PLA and to end the use of Tibet's own currency. And the Dalai Lama agreed to be elected as a vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC. Mao's gradualist strategy had scored a great success.

During the year that the Dalai Lama was in inland China, life in Tibet changed little. The core of the Tibetan sociocultural system remained intact, and monasticism had not been affected at all. Manorial estates were still producing wealth for their landlords based on the labor of their bound miser, and the Tibetan government, not the Chinese, maintained law and order throughout Tibet with its own officials who were promoted and funded entirely by the Tibetan government. Tibet also continued to use its own currency, while still accepting only Chinese silver dayan coins. And the Tibetan government still maintained an army of several thousand active troops under its own command headquarters.

Nevertheless, when the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa in 1955, many of the major changes he had agreed to in Beijing met with strong opposition from segments of his elite, so once again Mao backed off in order to sustain his gradualist policy. For example, Mao allowed the Dalai Lama to continue to maintain his own army and currency, although as a compromise, Tibet army officers now had to wear Chinese PLA uniforms on official Chinese occasions such as the holiday celebrating the founding of the PRC. However, with regard to one major issue agreed upon in Beijing, the creation of a Tibet Autonomous Region, the Kashag and the TWC moved forward. A committee called the Preparatory Committee for the [establishment of the] Tibet Autonomous Region (PCTAR) was organized to create the various offices and rules of the PCTAR, of which the Dalai Lama was to be its top director. Consequently, as 1956 began in Lhasa, Sino-Tibetan relations were going smoothly under Mao's gradualist policy and the Dalai Lama / Kashag's cooperation policy. At the same time, China's physical position in Tibet had been made secure, as the two motor highways from Lhasa to inland China were completed in December 1954 and were operating, while other internal highways had been and were being built within Tibet, as well as Tibet's first airport.

The same was not true of the situation in ethnographic Tibet (in Sichuan). There, a series of uprisings were precipitated by the forced implementation of land reforms. The background for this was Mao's famous "Socialist Transformation" campaign, which he launched in 1955. It strongly criticized cadres all over China for being too slow in implementing collectivization and instructed the party secretaries in all areas to speed up the implementation process. This was aimed at Han areas, but Mao said minority nationality areas could be included if their elites were ready to agree to such reforms. In Sichuan Province, Li Jingquan (the First Party Secretary), held a series of meetings to discuss implementing the Socialist Transformation campaign in Sichuan and set up a plan to expand collectivization for the Han areas. However, Sichuan also contained large Tibetan nationality areas known as Kham and other areas inhabited by the Yi minority, and Li Jingquan decided to include them in the Socialist Transformation campaign for Sichuan, informing

Beijing that the Tibetan and Yi leaders/elite had agreed to start "peaceful" democratic reforms.[32]

Li Jingquan's plan for reforms in Sichuan's Tibetan and Yi areas was criticized both by local Tibetan Party cadres like Tian Bao and, at the national level, by top leaders like Li Weihan (the director of the United Front Work Department and the Central Nationalities Commission), who argued to the contrary, that those areas were not ready for reforms, so prematurely forcing their implementation in this campaign could precipitate a revolt. Li Jingquan, however, insisted that the minority elites had agreed to reforms, so ignored these warnings and started to implement reforms in the Tibetan Khamba (and Yi) areas at the start of 1956. The Khamba elite, however, were not in favor of reforms, and had been pressured by Li Jingquan to say verbally they agreed, so Li should have known that this was really only faux approval, and thus was really a kind of forced, not peaceful, reform. Consequently, as the CCP's work teams began to implement reforms in the different Khamba areas starting in late February 1956, one Khamba county after another rose up in revolt. This turned out to be one of the biggest mistakes of Mao's minority policy. Kalön Ngabö was so upset by this that he recalled in an interview with the author that he contacted the Central Committee about it.

> When the Kham situation occurred, I reported to the Central Committee that this work was a complete mistake. Democratic reforms should be done from Tibet downwards and should not be done from down there [Sichuan] upwards [to Tibet]. The basic situation and things lie with Tibet proper. . . . We should make the situation in Tibet calm and in accordance with the people's thinking, do the democratic reforms in a nice way. If we had done it from up there (Tibet) downwards, there would not have been any problem. That's what we suggested. But, they did it there [Kham] and the revolt took place there and all the garbage from there [Khambas seeking refuge in Tibet] was dumped into Tibet. That's what happened. Later, when I met with Chairman Mao personally, he told me, "What you said was correct. At that time, I was also a rightist. I was regarded as slightly on the right side."[33]

As the reforms started, the local Khambas attacked the CCP officials and work teams who were stationed in their county seats and easily took control of their own area. Beijing responded by sending reinforcement troops, which quickly retook control of these county administrative centers. The Khamba rebels now fled back to their homes or to remote mountain areas to continue to fight using hit-and-run guerrilla tactics or, in many cases, to flee to Tibet where they believed, correctly, they would be safe, since the Dalai Lama's government was still in control internally. By the summer of 1956, therefore, armed Khambas were arriving in Lhasa to escape the fighting and forced reforms in Sichuan, and with them came detailed firsthand reports of the death and destruction that had occurred in Sichuan, as well as details of the confiscations and transfers of the land and wealth from the Khamba elites. As a result, in the midst of what was a relatively calm period in Sino-Tibetan relations in Lhasa, the news from Sichuan shocked and frightened the Lhasa elite, raising the question of whether Lhasa was next, and if so, when? An atmosphere of anxiety and fear now overtook the city.

---

[32] In the Khamba and Yi areas in Sichuan, the basic land and class reforms (Ch. tu gai) that had already been implemented in inland China in 1950–51 had not yet been started, so Mao's policy called for first doing the voluntary democratic reforms wherein the Khamba landlords would get compensation for the loss of their land and property. See Goldstein 2014, 105.

[33] Ngabö, interview, Beijing, 1995, H.0040.04. On the "right" here means not starting reforms until the Tibetans were in favor of it.

In Lhasa, this anxiety and fear were exacerbated when Fan Ming, the most hard-line leftist among the leading Chinese cadres, was placed in temporary charge of the TWC after its two leading cadres, Zhang Jingwu and Zhang Guohua, both of whom supported Mao's gradualist policy, went to Beijing in June 1956. Fan Ming, as mentioned earlier, opposed Mao's gradualist policy and was eager to implement democratic reforms quickly. Now, given the enthusiasm for reforms generated by Mao's Socialist Transformation campaign and what seemed to be the successful start of reforms in Tibetan areas in Sichuan, Fan launched what came to be called the "Great Expansion" (Ch. da kuo zhang) because it involved recruiting thousands of new Han cadres to Tibet from inland China as well as new Tibetan cadres and party members from the rural areas. He also tried to start trial reforms in a few small areas, one of which was in Chamdo, a Khamba area in Tibet's eastern province.[34] However, when a small revolt occurred in response to this in Chamdo in July 1956,[35] Mao and the Central Committee realized that this was likely a portent of what would happen throughout Tibet if Fan Ming were allowed to continue to push to start reforms in 1957, when the Dalai Lama and the elite were not ready. Mao, therefore, as in 1954, again intervened to stop him, this time by having the Central Committee send the TWC a famous set of explicit instructions about reforms on 4 September 1956 (commonly called the "9/4" instructions in Chinese).[36] These instructions provide a rare window into what Mao and the

---

[34] After Chamdo was captured in the 1951 invasion, it was administrated by a specially created Chamdo Liberation Committee. Consequently, Fan Ming believed it would be more likely to be agree to start reforms.

[35] This revolt occurred in November 1956 in Markham, a district located in the southern part of Chamdo. It was led by Tsewang Dorje.

[36] The Secretarial Department of the General Office of the Central Committee was responsible for transmitting all of the Party's internal documents and directives, which is why the Central Committee, not Mao or the Politburo, was mentioned as the sender of this and almost all instructions to the TWC in Lhasa. However, the General Office really served the Politburo and the supreme leader Mao, not the whole Central Committee, and it was Mao who was controlling Tibet policy. So "Mao and the Central Committee" really meant Mao and the Politburo. See Tsai and Liao 2018.

Central Committee were thinking internally regarding Tibet and reforms in fall 1956. They explicitly specified that with respect to securing the agreement of the Dalai Lama and the elite for starting reforms, that acceptance had to be "genuine" acceptance, that is to say, not the faux acceptance that was used in Sichuan to force reforms and thereby precipitated a large-scale revolt. The 9/4 instructions concluded by ordering the TWC not to start any reforms, even just trial reforms.

[To the] TWC:

> [D]emocratic reforms in Tibet must be peaceful reforms. In order to carry out peaceful reforms, we must first do good preparation work with the upper-hierarchy Tibetans and then carry out the reforms. This preparation work mainly involves two things:
>
> First, we need to have good consultation about reforms with all Tibetan leaders. [We must] carefully and repeatedly discuss these issues with them and get their *true agreement, not forced agreement.* If they do not really indicate that they want the reforms, then do not forcibly carry out any reforms.
>
> Second, under the principle of not lowering the upper-level Tibetans' political positions and living standards, we must make appropriate arrangements through consultation for the work and living conditions of the monks and aristocrats, especially for the leaders.
>
> *If the two points mentioned above are not done well and we have not obtained the real agreement of the upper-hierarchy Tibetans, and if we are forcing them to carry out the reforms, trouble will occur when carrying out the reforms.* If so, not only will this be harmful to the Tibetan working people and to the unity between the Han and Tibetan people, but it will also put us into a politically passive condition.
>
> Democratic reforms in the Tibet region must be carried out in a peaceful way. [The reforms] must be decided on by the Tibetan people and their public leaders [Ch. gongzhong lingxiu] according to their own will. This has been clearly specified in the "Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet," [and] in several conversations between Chairman Mao and Tibetan elite figures. . . . If we cannot work like this during the implementation of the reforms, we will lose the trust of the people and this will be harmful to us. Tibetan democratic reforms must be carried out [only] when we have done the full preparatory work and the upper-level Tibetans are really willing to carry out the reforms. During the reforms, we should resolutely try our best to reduce troubles or even have no troubles. *We would rather postpone the reforms than force them.*
>
> *According to the current working conditions in Tibet, the condition of our cadres, the attitudes of the upper hierarchy, and the things that recently happened in the Chamdo region, the conditions for doing reforms in Tibet are not present and our preparatory work cannot be done within one or two years. Thus, democratic reforms in Tibet cannot be carried out in the First Five-Year Plan [1953–57].*[37] *And it might not be*

---

[37] Here the Central Committee was using the national system of five-year plans, not the TAR's system, which started in 1956.

> *possible in the Second Five-Year Plan either [1958–62]. It may even be postponed until the period of the Third Five-Year Plan [1963–67].* We have waited for several years [since 1951] to do democratic reforms in Tibet, and now we must keep on waiting. We can say that this is our compromise with the elite Tibetans. We think that this compromise is necessary and correct. Since the Tibetan nationality still does not quite trust our Han nationality and the Central Committee—that is, us—it is an important task for our party to take all necessary and suitable measures to remove the distrust of Tibetans toward us. If we make appropriate compromises and are willing to wait for a while concerning the issue of reforms, we will significantly increase the trust of the Tibetan people toward us and this will be beneficial to the successful implementation of the democratic reforms in Tibet and the various subsequent work after the reforms. *To work like this, slower and steadier, will be better and, in actuality, it will end up being faster. . . .*
>
> *As for the key trial reforms that you suggested, this should now definitely be stopped. And as for the propaganda work regarding the reforms, this should be appropriately adjusted and reduced.*
>
> *The essence of the above points should be explained clearly to the Dalai, Panchen, and the other elite Tibetans. Make them feel at ease and ask them to do preparatory activities and work to put other Tibetans at ease with you.* To the activists who support the reforms among Tibetans, appropriately explain and patiently educate them, and tell them how to manage their work so as to create the conditions for doing the reforms. Do not neglect these people and let them lose their direction. [If you do that], it will benefit the right. . . .[38]

However, Fan Ming did not convey the "essence" of these instructions to the Dalai Lama and the Kashag and continued talking about reforms, so by late 1956, there was widespread fear in Lhasa that the Chinese were about to follow the example of Sichuan and forcibly impose land and class reforms in Tibet in 1957. At this tense juncture in time, the Dalai Lama visited India.

THE DALAI LAMA'S VISIT TO INDIA

In 1956, the Dalai Lama was invited to India to attend the "Buddha Jayanti" celebrations commemorating the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddha's death/nirvana. Beijing initially did not agree to this but relented later, in October, and the Dalai Lama left Lhasa in late November, crossing into India on 24 November 1956.

This was not a simple religious visit, because the Dalai Lama was mentally and emotionally primed to seek asylum and remain in India to oppose Beijing. The positive attitude he developed toward Mao and China during his yearlong visit to inland China in 1954–55 had been negatively transformed by both the forced implementation of democratic reforms in Sichuan and the bloody uprising it precipitated, and more immediately by Fan Ming's moves in 1956 to start reforms in Tibet in 1957.

---

[38] DPRC. "Instructions [from the CC to the TWC] on Democratic Reforms in Tibet," 4 September 1956 (emphasis added).

The Dalai Lama's views at this time were also heavily influenced by his Lord Chamberlain Phala, who was secretly in contact with Jenkhentsisum (JKTS), the main émigré resistance organization in India, one of whose three principals was the Dalai Lama's elder brother Gyalo Thondup. JKTS was dealing with the Indian and American governments, and had sent the Dalai Lama letters as early as late 1955 imploring him to attend the Buddha Jayanti and then stay in India. So it is not surprising that from the moment he reached Sikkim, the Dalai Lama was under intense pressure to decide in favor of seeking exile. The government of India (GOI) had allowed the Dalai Lama's two elder brothers free contact with him whenever they wanted, and they used this unfettered access to meet him as soon as he crossed into India, where they implored him to remain in India, arguing that his presence and stature in exile was Tibet's best chance to regain its freedom from China.[39]

As he crossed into India, the Dalai Lama, as mentioned earlier, was already leaning heavily toward not returning, and after talking privately with his brothers for hours on his first evening in India just beyond the Sikkim border, it is not surprising that he agreed with them and decided to request asylum from Prime Minister Nehru when he met with him in Delhi in the coming days. The history of modern Tibet was teetering at the edge of a major shift in direction. The Dalai Lama recalled some of his thinking at this time.

> When we got to India, the situation in [the] Kham area was very clear. [And] in the areas under the Tibetan government, Tashilhunpo [the Panchen Lama's monastery/unit] was making problems by saying that democratic reforms must be started soon. So we were saying, "Under such conditions, the situation is very bad." The attitude of the Chinese was [also] getting worse and worse. . . . And then we came to India. I [also] think the Sikkim Chögyal [the Crown Prince] had said [when he was in Lhasa earlier in 1956], that I should come to India during this Buddha Jayanti, and that the Indian government will help and so will the Americans. I think he may have said that.[40]

After a few days of the official Buddha Jayanti activities, the Dalai Lama had his first private meeting with Prime Minister Nehru on 27 November 1956. He had been led to believe by his brothers and the Crown Prince that he would receive a totally sympathetic and supportive reception from Nehru on behalf of the GOI. However, what he actually received was a bitter dose of realpolitik. In an interview, the Dalai Lama recalled: "when I actually mentioned to the Prime Minister [that I wanted to stay in India], he told me I should return."[41] The Dalai Lama described this meeting with Nehru,

---

[39] Taktse Rinpoche, interview, USA, 1993, H.0071.01. Taktse had just returned to India from America to meet the Dalai Lama and also to introduce John Reagan, a key CIA officer, to his brother Gyalo Thondup.

[40] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1994, H.0019.03.

> I told him all Tibetans now pinned their remaining hopes on the government and people of India. And then I explained why I wanted to stay in India until we could win back our freedom by peaceful means.
>
> He was very kind and listened patiently, but he was firmly convinced that nothing could be done for Tibet at present. He said that nobody had ever formally recognized our country's independence. He agreed with me that it was useless to try to fight against the Chinese. If we tried, they could easily bring in more forces to crush us completely. *And he advised me to go back to Tibet and work peacefully to try to carry out the Seventeen-Point Agreement.*[42]

In his second autobiography, the Dalai Lama added a few details that suggest he felt Nehru was not even particularly interested in this issue:

> At first he listened and nodded politely. But I suppose that my passionate speech must have been too long for him and after a while he appeared to lose concentration, as if he was about to nod off. Finally, he looked up at me and said that he understood what I was saying. "But you must realize," he went on somewhat impatiently, "that India cannot support you. . . . You must go back to your country and try to work with the Chinese on the basis of the Seventeen-Point Agreement."[43]

Nehru's blunt advice about going back to Tibet not only left the Dalai Lama stunned, but even more so, shocked his brother Gyalo Thondup and JKTS, who had been dealing closely with Indian officials for over a year regarding the Dalai Lama's visit and believed they had reached an understanding with them. They were wrong and had badly misread the GOI's views on Tibet. For example, Nehru actually held very negative views about the Tibet's traditional system and thought Tibet should modernize its anachronistic institutions. He conveyed this in a note he sent to his foreign secretary on 26 December 1956, in which he spoke disdainfully about Tibet's feudal and monastic systems and disparagingly about the Tibetans' naive views about fighting the Chinese militarily.

> Shri Apa Pant [the Political Officer in Sikkim] appears to be enamored of this "traditional way of life" [in Tibet], which is completely feudal under a garb of religion. *If one thing is certain, it is that this traditional way of life cannot continue, now that Tibet has come face to face with the modern world. This is not merely a question of modern amenities, but rather of the basic structure of the State. There is bound to be land reform. If the monasteries, who own vast estates, resist this land reform, they will fail in*

---

41. Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.06 (emphasis added).
42. Dalai Lama 1962, 148 (emphasis added).
43. Dalai Lama 1990, 117–18.

> *doing so ultimately, and the whole structure of Buddhism based on these monasteries will also suffer. If Tibet wants to keep the essence of Buddhism, it will have to give up these accretions which have nothing to do with religion and which are opposed to modern conditions, both capitalistic and communist. . . . The danger in Tibet arises more from the false steps [revolt] that the Tibetans might take than from the deliberate policy of the Chinese Government. . . . While it is clear that the Tibetans are intensely averse to Chinese dominance, their ideas about any steps which they might take to end this are extraordinarily confused and immature. Foolish steps taken might well injure them greatly.* We are naturally very friendly to the Tibetans and we are going to continue to be so. But we cannot allow ourselves to be dragged into wrong courses, wrong both from our point of view and that of Tibet. We should take every opportunity of maintaining and developing our cultural and like contacts with Tibet. But, at the same time, we should take care not to be pushed into some wrong activity because of our sympathy for the Tibetans, or under their pressure.[44]

And in another official memorandum, Nehru said:

> *I told the Dalai Lama that his brother at Kalimpong [Gyalo Thondup] often spoke very foolishly and it seemed to me that he was rather unbalanced.* I told him that as he [the Dalai Lama] had already agreed by a Treaty to Tibet being part of China but autonomous, it was not easy for him to break this agreement. Indeed, any attempt to do so would result in a major conflict and much misery to Tibet. *In an armed conflict, Tibet could not possibly defeat China.* I also pointed out that we had a treaty with China in regard to Tibet. Our position all along had been that sovereignty rested with China but Tibet should be autonomous. Therefore, the best course for the Dalai Lama to adopt was to accept this sovereignty but insist on full autonomy in regard to internal affairs. He would be on strong ground on this, and he could build up the Tibetan people under his leadership.
>
> 11. *I told the Dalai Lama also that I had been surprised to learn that some people had advised him to remain in India and not return to Tibet. That would be the height of folly and it would harm him as well as Tibet. This was not the way to serve the cause of Tibet. He must be in his own country and give a lead to his people.*[45]

Gyalo Thondup believed he had been double-crossed by the GOI, but tried to put a good face on Nehru's rebuff of the Dalai Lama's wish to remain by telling the Dalai Lama that if he wanted to enter exile, India would have no choice but to agree. India, he said, would not force the Dalai Lama to return.[46] Gyalo Thondup also told the Dalai Lama that even if India refused to grant asylum, there were always other countries to go to and that the United States would help in this.[47] The

---

[44] Hasan 2005, 617 (emphasis added).

[45] Ibid. Note to N. R. Pillai, Secretary General, MEA, R.K Nehru, India's Ambassador in Beijing, and Apa Pant, POS, on "Talks with Chou En-lai—IV," 1 January 1957, pp. 618–19 (emphasis added).

[46] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.06.

[47] Shakabpa diary, entry for 18 August 1956.

Dalai Lama, therefore, accepted that Nehru's rejection did not end the option of entering exile, so he continued to weigh the pros and cons about whether to stay or return, particularly examining the nature of support from the United States. But Nehru's strong comment about the folly of trying to fight the Chinese was an unexpected eye-opener.

Although Mao and the Central Committee had allowed the Dalai Lama to visit India to attend the Buddha Jayanti celebrations in keeping with the policy stated in the 9/4 instructions, they understood that there was a chance he might remain in exile and lead the anti-Chinese resistance movement that was already operating out of Kalimpong. To reduce that risk, Mao sent Premier Zhou Enlai to India twice while the Dalai Lama was there (in late November and late December), to meet with the Dalai Lama and discuss the future of Tibet. Mao understood that the Dalai Lama and the elite were deeply troubled by the uprising and bloody violence in Sichuan and that they were worried that Tibet would be next, so he sent Zhou Enlai to explain his 9/4 policy and answer the Dalai Lama's questions in person. Zhou, in addition, was to convey Mao's personal assurance that there would be no reforms in Tibet for at least the next six years—and even longer if conditions at that time were still not ready. Democratic reforms, and even trial reforms, were basically to be taken off the table in Tibet until the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan elite were genuinely ready to accept such reforms. The Dalai Lama said that Zhou Enlai actually told him in the course of a private conversation that even if it were to take fifty years for this state of mind to come to pass, Beijing was willing to wait.[48] The two meetings between Zhou and the Dalai Lama had a major impact on the Dalai Lama's thinking, because as mentioned earlier Fan Ming had not informed the Dalai Lama about the content of the 9/4 cable.[49]

The Dalai Lama, of course, had no independent way to verify that Zhou's assurances were not just a cynical ploy to induce him to return to live under Chinese control, but Prime Minister Nehru played a significant role, telling the Dalai Lama forcefully that he was confident about the sincerity of Zhou's promises. The Dalai Lama recalled Nehru's account to him of his [Nehru's] meeting with Zhou: "I had long talks with him [the Dalai Lama] then. I told him of Premier Chou Enlai's friendly approach and of his assurance that he would respect the autonomy of Tibet. I suggested to him [the Dalai Lama] *that he should accept these assurances in good faith and cooperate in maintaining that autonomy and bringing about certain reforms in Tibet*."[50]

---

[48] Dalai Lama 1990, 119.

[49] For a detailed discussion of Zhou's visit and meetings with Nehru and the Tibetans, see Goldstein 2014, 335–82.

[50] Dalai Lama 1977, 152–53 (emphasis added).

After the Dalai Lama's talks with Zhou and Nehru, he understood that Fan Ming's talk of starting reforms in 1957 was not going to happen, so if he returned to Lhasa he would continue his position as the head of the Tibetan ("local") government which would continue to administrate Tibet's internal affairs, basically as it had been doing since 1951, and there would be no reforms for years to come. The Dalai Lama and his officials would continue to make administrative decisions, collect taxes, settle law cases, punish criminals, oversee monastic affairs, and promote and demote their own officials without having to vet these decisions with the Chinese. And the traditional society, including the vast monastic segment and mass monasticism would continue unchanged for the foreseeable future. Consequently, unlike the Dalai Lama's deeply pessimistic view about the future of Tibet when he arrived in India, he now felt that *not returning* would likely have negative consequences for the preservation of Budhism and the Tibetan way of life, since it was likely that the Chinese would move to quickly implement democratic reforms should he remain in India and lead the opposition. The weight this placed on the Dalai Lama was indirectly conveyed by his mother, who recalled that he responded to her pleas that he remain in India by saying, "What good would remaining here in safety be, while all the people of Tibet are left at the mercy of the Chinese."[51] In other words, he accepted that with him in Tibet, Tibetan society could continue for at least a decade or more, and possibly even the rest of the century.

Nevertheless, before he could make a final decision, the 21-year-old Dalai Lama had to assess a new and complicating element—the re-entrance of the United States into the "Tibet issue."

THE UNITED STATES, THE ÉMIGRÉ RESISTANCE IN INDIA, AND THE KHAMBA RESISTANCE IN LHASA

The United States had been interested in Tibet in 1950–51 as part of its Cold War strategy of trying to weaken and contain Communist China, and had tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Dalai Lama to flee into exile from the Tibetan border town of Yadong where he had been waiting to see if the Chinese would invade Lhasa.[52] Even after the Seventeen-Point Agreement was signed and the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa (in the summer of 1951), U.S. representatives made another attempt to persuade him to flee from Lhasa, but when this also failed, Washington relegated Tibet to the Cold War's back burner.[53]

The election of Dwight Eisenhower in 1952, however, led to significant changes in U.S. attitudes regarding covert activities. Eisenhower ordered a review of the

---

[51] Goodman 1986, 249. From an interview with the Dalai Lama's mother in 1980.

[52] This section is an abridgement of Goldstein 2014, chapter 12.

[53] This American initiative is discussed in detail in Goldstein 1989, 782- 813.

National Security Council (NSC), which produced several important changes in the manner in which national security policy and covert ops could be conducted.[54] An NSC directive (NSC 5412/2) was issued on 28 December 1954 that set the stage for the later U.S. involvement in covert operations in Tibet. It said that covert operations should be designed to "Create and exploit troublesome problems for International Communism, impair relations between the USSR and Communist China and between them and their satellites, complicate control within the USSR, Communist China and their satellites. . . ." And it said, " to the extent practicable in areas dominated or threatened by International Communism, *develop underground resistance and facilitate covert and guerrilla operations and ensure availability of those forces in the event of war.*[55]

Tibet clearly fit these parameters for opposing Communist China and for covert operations, but after the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa in 1951, Washington had no obvious partner there. That changed in 1956, when the revolt in the Khamba areas in Sichuan began. The presence of a large-scale Khamba uprising presented the United States with an unexpected opportunity for covert operations against the Chinese Communists and quickly caught its attention.

Frank Holober, the CIA's desk officer for Tibet from 1957–59, explained a bit of the Cold War thinking that informed the CIA at this time:

> The agency's ideology was that China was a bad country that was trying to utilize the strategy it developed within China internationally. That strategy was to win the countryside and isolate the cities and then they will fall like ripe plums. In the international arena, the countryside was equated with the Third World countries, so winning them over would isolate the capitalist countries, which would then fall like ripe plums. They spent lots of money on this, probably more than they could afford. Our main point was to embarrass the Chinese. . . . We were trying to take prudent steps to counter this wherever we could. If we could give them a knock on the head, we would like to do this. If we could turn them in on themselves, we could slow up this strategy of theirs. So our policy was geared to combat them in every way—throughout the world. Tibet was one of these. We had a program there [Tibet], but it was not too elaborate, actually, rather modest.[56]

---

[54] Much of the information on this aspect of the Eisenhower administration derives from a dissertation, Willner 1995.

[55] NSC 5412/2, cited in "The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War, Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships, Part I, 1945–1961," prepared for the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, by the Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 308–10. Accessed on 19 February 2010 at www.ratical.com/ratville/JFK/USO/appC.html. Emphasis added.

[56] Holober, interview, USA, 1993.

The Sichuan uprising, therefore, offered an excellent opportunity to “knock” the Chinese on their heads and embarrass them internationally, although no one in Washington or Langley knew much of anything about Tibet, Kham, or JKTS. However, as information about the fighting in Sichuan made its way to Washington, an astonishing piece of information about the Dalai Lama and his advisors was passed on to the U.S. government by the Crown Prince of Sikkim, who had gone to Lhasa at the end of December 1955 to give the Dalai Lama an invitation to attend the Buddha Jayanti celebration. After returning, he went to see R. Borden Reams, the U.S. Consul General in Calcutta, on 28 June 1956.[57] Reams reported this meeting to the State Department as follows:

> The Maharaj Kumar [the Crown Prince] of Sikkim called privately today and made the following points which he asked be submitted in strictest secrecy to the American Government. He also requested that this inquiry not (repeat not) be made through Embassy Delhi.
>
> 1. The Dalai Lama is anxious to leave Tibet and despite obvious difficulties his advisors believe that his flight can be arranged. GOI has been approached regarding asylum in India but response although favorable is not (repeat not) regarded by Tibetans as firm enough. Maharaj Kumar wishes assurances that, in the event GOI asylum refused, Dalai Lama could be assured asylum elsewhere in addition to financial support.
>
> 2. Fighting in Kham is severe and Chinese casualties are heavy. Tibetans have captured considerable quantities of arms including Russian anti-aircraft equipment.
>
> 3. Tibetans believe that 1,000 mixed rifles and machine guns will be necessary to effectively spread fighting to other parts of Tibet. If these arms could be delivered to [East] Pakistan, Maharaj Kumar and other Tibetan leaders guarantee that they can be gotten to Tibet.
>
> 4. In the event of general outbreak hostilities Tibetans are certain that they can quickly evict Chinese from all Tibet. In the process they will expect to get considerable quantities of arms and light artillery.
>
> 5. Tibetans are untrained in use artillery and anti-aircraft. GOI has been requested to train ten Tibetans but so far no (repeat no) decision taken. Tibetans wonder whether Tibetan pilgrims proceeding to Burma and Thailand could possibly be trained in latter place.
>
> In reply, I told the Maharaj Kumar that I could, of course, make an inquiry particularly with regard to possible asylum for the Dalai Lama. I told him that I naturally could make no (repeat no) comment on any of the proposals except to impress upon him that the United States must always keep in mind her relations with the Government of India and I doubted whether we would do anything which might in any way imperil these relations. Maharaj Kumar stated his personal belief

---

[57] Sikkim at this time was a kingdom ruled by the Crown Prince’s father, Tashi Namgyal. It was a tributary of India that controlled its own external defense and diplomacy.

> that most Indian officials, including ranking ones, would be glad to see something done but that they are for obvious reasons afraid or unable to do anything themselves.
>
> I feel that I must make some further reply to the Maharaj Kumar and would appreciate an indication of the Department's thinking.
>
> *Reams*[58]

The Crown Prince's report was a bombshell that could not easily be dismissed, since he was a prominent and politically savvy figure who was going to be the next King of Sikkim, and he had just returned from a visit to Lhasa where he had met with many leading Tibetans including the Dalai Lama and his Lord Chamberlain Phala. This also could not be an inadvertent translation problem, since the Crown Prince was Western educated and spoke perfect English. Consequently, the discussion in Washington now was not just about what use the United States could make of the Khamba uprising in Sichuan to harm the Chinese Communists, but the possibility of a full-scale insurgency in Tibet led by the Dalai Lama in exile.

All of this raises an intriguing and important question—was it the Dalai Lama who asked the Crown Prince to inquire about these issues with the Americans? The Crown Prince's comments as represented by Reams, clearly reflect the widespread fear among those around the Dalai Lama that democratic reforms might soon be imposed that would place the Dalai Lama's situation at risk, but it seems completely unlikely that the Dalai Lama himself would have risked raising such a dangerous issue with someone who, though intermarried with the Tibetan aristocracy, was not an extremely close and trusted member of the Dalai Lama's inner circle.

On the other hand, the Crown Prince was known to be working with JKTS and the GOI, and apparently did raise political issues about asylum with the Dalai Lama when they met in Lhasa. For example, as mentioned earlier, the Dalai Lama said that the Crown Prince told him, "[You] should come to India during this Buddha Jayanti and that the *Indian government will help and so will the Americans.* I think he may have said that."[59] So there were discussions about this. Consequently, there was a good reason why the Dalai Lama or his advisors would have wanted clarification about whether he could definitely secure asylum, should he need to seek it soon. Keep in mind that this occurred before Mao's intervention against Fan Ming in Tibet regarding reforms.

If it is not plausible that the Dalai Lama would have directly asked anything like that of the Crown Prince, who else could have credibly asked him to convey the message? In other words, who would have had enough stature and access to the

---

[58] U.S. National Archives, 793.B.11/8/2836, telegram no. 351, from Consul General in Calcutta to U.S. Secretary of State, dated 28 June 1956.

[59] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1994, H.0019.03.

Dalai Lama to convince the Crown Prince that this was a genuine request that should be secretly passed on to the U.S. government? The obvious candidate was Phala, who was the Dalai Lama's lord chamberlain and head of his Secretariat office, or if not Phala directly, one of Phala's most trusted colleagues, such as the monk official Tseja Gyentsen.[60] We know from Shakabpa's diary that Phala and Tseja Gyentsen had the opportunity to do this since he had met with them many times, and Phala, by this time, was deeply involved with the JKTS émigré resistance organization in Kalimpong and knew that the Sikkimese royals were also working with them and the United States.

In fact, getting the Dalai Lama out of Tibet was considered so important that there was a loose plan to do this even if the Chinese did not give the Dalai Lama permission to go to India. Litang Khamba representatives in India had told JKTS that if the Chinese said no to the visit and the Dalai Lama still wanted to attend, there were Khambas in Lhasa who could spirit him and his two tutors out of Tibet.[61] Later, there was also a plan to force the Dalai Lama to remain in India (even if he wanted to return) by having Gombo Tashi, the major Litang Khamba leader in Lhasa, start a military action against the Chinese in Lhasa to make it too dangerous for the Dalai Lama to return.

Consequently, it must have been Phala (or Tseja Gyentsen on Phala's behalf) who discussed this issue with the Crown Prince. Given the decisions that would have to be made about the Buddha Jayanta celebration and India, Phala knew that such information would be critical not only if the Dalai Lama eventually got to visit India but, more immediately, for deciding whether or not to risk an attempt to escape from Lhasa should the Chinese not permit the Dalai Lama to leave. This query, however, obviously went far beyond concerns about exile and asylum, and reveals that the Dalai Lama's closest advisor, Phala, was thinking seriously about taking up arms to try drive the Chinese out of Tibet and felt that with U.S. assistance they would be able to accomplish this.

Their query is also significant because it reveals the dangerous tendency of Tibetan militants/nationalists to simplify and underestimate what it would take to force the Chinese out of Tibet militarily. The query's confident assertions about militarily driving the Chinese out of Tibet seems more in the realm of wishful thinking than a view based on realistic military assessments. This, moreover, was the same kind of thinking that was cited in Shakabpa's diary entry for 22 August 1956, when JKTS discussed being able to take military control of Yadong, the important Tibetan town and Chinese administrative center adjacent to the Indian border. JKTS and Phala, of course, knew that Chiang Kai-shek had been unable to defeat the PLA in the Chinese Civil War, despite being the recipient of massive U.S. support, and also that the Americans had been unable to push the PLA out of Korea once they joined the Korean War, but nonetheless, they were still hopeful. In retrospect, they were far too hopeful that if the outside world—America or Taiwan or India—would come to their aid and provide the necessary support in diplomacy, finances, supplies, and training, they would be able to succeed in the rugged mountains of Tibet. As will be seen next, the CIA officers involved with the Tibet operation had a very different, and negative, professional assessment of what the Tibetans could hope to actually achieve.

---

[60] Since it would be too dangerous for the Tibetan resistance leaders in Kalimpong such as JKTS to send political letters to Phala, because of his close association with the Dalai Lama, they were normally sent to Tseja Gyentsen, so the Crown Prince knew who he was and had met him several times when he was in Lhasa.

[61] Shakabpa diary, entry for 18 June 1956.

Soon after the Crown Prince's visit to Reams at the Calcutta consulate, JKTS independently made their own appeal to the United States and a host of other countries. As mentioned in Goldstein 2014 (chapter 6), Phala was working with JKTS and had assisted three monk officials to make a faux "runaway" from Lhasa (together with a few People's Association members) so they could assist JKTS. The émigrés in India were seeking more credibility with skeptical journalists and diplomats who had been questioning both the presence of a real opposition group within Tibet and that JKTS was part of it.[62] With the new people from Tibet now on hand as a result of Phala's assistance, JKTS finally had concrete evidence to support their claim that they represented the Tibetan people resisting the Chinese.

JKTS's work on this appeal was given added significance when Gyalo Thondup received the following upbeat report from his brother, Taktse Rinpoche, who was then living in the United States. It was recorded in Shakabpa's diary.

> 13 July 1956 Shakabpa met Gyalo Thondup at Teesta. Gyalo Thondup said, [I] received a letter from Taktse Rinpoche saying that according to the leaders in the U.S, this is an appropriate time to make a request about the Tibetan issue.[63]

JKTS, therefore, took advantage of this and immediately launched a new publicity campaign that sent a long appeal letter to many countries (including the United States, France, India, Pakistan, and Great Britain) and the media, signed by Thubden Nyinji, the most senior of the three "runaway" monk officials. The appeal (which was sent on 20 July to the Queen of England) ended with, "I most earnestly request you and your people to gain for us the sympathy and help to restore to Tibet her independence. Though this appeal for your sympathy in our cause is signed by me alone, I speak on behalf of the millions of my fellow Tibetans who today are suffering to the point of death for their freedom."[64]

---

[62] Goldstein 2014.

[63] Shakabpa diary, entry for 13 July 1956.

[64] British Foreign Office Records, FO371/121145, 1956. Letter [in English] to the Queen of England.

Thubden Nyinji and Gyalo Thondup also traveled together to Calcutta to present the appeal letter to consulates there and to meet with newspapers and others in the media, but with respect to the United States, Thubden Nyinji went alone and gave the appeal letter in person to Reams on 31 July. By this time, Reams had received a response from the Department of State regarding the Crown Prince's inquires. It was sympathetic but cautious with respect to commitments, authorizing him to say only that, "The United States was deeply sympathetic to the aspirations of the Tibetans to independence from the Chinese Communists and respected their right to maintain their own government and traditions; that if the Dalai Lama left Tibet, he should ask India for asylum; and that the United States would hope, *in appropriate circumstances, to assist in asylum in some Asian country.*"[65] This obviously did not clarify all the issues raised, but the telegram was important, because with respect to asylum, should India not cooperate, the Americans would help him to secure asylum elsewhere in Asia.

Reams, however, presumably received additional instructions about America's interest in assisting the Khambas and Tibet, because he responded verbally much more positively to Thubden Nyinji, as Shakabpa's diary recorded:

> 31 July 1956: [Reams said] that since the Tibetans are now fighting in Kham, the U.S. is thinking of assisting Tibet and are now in the process of discussing it. I will definitely give you a reply before 3 months have passed. Tell us what help you need clearly. If it [the answer from the U.S.] comes in 1–2 weeks, I will write at once to Darjeeling. [Nyinji then said to Reams] Concerning assistance, please give us money and arms and also provide training for people coming from Tibet in how to use weapons, etc. In reply, he [Reams] said that assistance in arms and money is okay, and as for training in arms, I think it will come soon.[66]

In the meantime, when the Crown Prince returned to Calcutta on 18 July to get Washington's response to the questions he brought from Lhasa, Reams conveyed to him both the "official" State Department message cited above, but also added an interesting request which signaled Washington's interest in the Tibet situation—he asked the Crown Prince to arrange for Khenjung, the JKTS principal who was mainly responsible for relations within Tibet, to come to meet him in person, explaining: "There are many things to ask regarding Tibet."[67] JKTS immediately convened a meeting to discuss what Khenjung should say to Reams, and they decided that the Crown Prince and his sister Phünkang Lhajam would accompany him to Calcutta.

---

[65] U.S. National Archives, Telegram 23 from State Department to Calcutta, 24 July 1956, cited in 793b.00/11–157, Research Report # 403, November 1957, "United States Policy Concerning the Legal Status of Tibet 1942–1956." Emphasis added.

[66] The Tibetan for this important section in Shakabpa's diary is: bod mi rnams nas deng dus khams phyogs rgol 'dzing byas gshis a gzhung nas bod la rogs ram gnang rgyu'i dgongs bzhed kyis deng sang bka' mol gnang mus la zla gsum khongs bka' lan nges par 'bul rgyu dang rogs ram ji dgos bka' gsal gnang dgos/ gal srid bdun phrag 1–2 khongs byung na lam seng rdo gling la phyag bris 'bul rgyur [end of Reams' comments] mtshan dang phyag bris rgyag phyogs skor gsang ba'i phyag bris bzo gnang mdzad pa dang/ rogs ram skor dngul dang/ go lag/ bod nas mi rigs 'byor rgyu yod pa de dag la go lag slob sbyong gnang rogs sogs zhu gnang mdzad pa dngul dang go lag rogs ram yong 'gro zhing/ go lag slob sbyong [nga'i] sems la btang na [the phrase *btang na* makes no sense here] 'phral du yong gi red sogs zer 'dug ces dang. Shakabpa diary, entry for 31 July 1956.

Consequently, although the official State Department response to the Lhasa query was not especially forthcoming, Reams' subsequent face-to-face comments to both Thubden Nyinji and the Crown Prince revealed that by August 1956 the U.S. government was giving JKTS clear signs of interest in the possibility of providing assistance to Tibetans in the anti-Chinese resistance.

Since the State Department and the CIA have not released basic documents on the Tibet covert operation, it is difficult to know precisely what discussions were going on within those agencies about Tibet. However, according to Sam Halpern (a CIA officer in the Far East Division who was later Desmond FitzGerald's executive officer when FitzGerald was Deputy Director for Operations), the initial driving force was Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his Under Secretary of State, Herbert Hoover Jr.. They saw the Tibet uprising as an excellent opportunity to create major problems for the Chinese, and had come to the conclusion that the U.S should try to use the Tibetans to harass and keep the Chinese Communists off balance.[68] Sometime in late summer or early fall of 1956, the CIA received orders to work up a covert Tibet operation.

Back in India, relations continued to deepen with the United States. In mid October, new things like the size of "drop zones," the names of trainees, and how to exfiltrate through Pakistan were being discussed with Phünkang Lhajam at the Calcutta consulate. Shakabpa's diary noted this:

> 18 October 1956 In the morning Khenjung arrived and said: Yesterday Phünkang Lhajam came and said that we have received replies from the Americans one after another. It was inconvenient for them to answer the rest of the issues [that we raised but] regarding the places to [air] drop flyers and weapons, they [the drop zones] need to be places 150 feet by 400 feet that can be identified on a map. You should send the names, ages and numbers of the trainees soon. You [Shakabpa] should discuss this with Gyalo Thondup today.
>
> 23 October 1956 Through Phünkang, we received a message from the U.S. telling us to send trainees. I [Shakabpa] spoke with Gyadotsang [a prominent Litang Khamba family in Kalimpong] and have arranged for a few people to be sent. [I said] The wireless operators and the trainees can go to Pakistan where, with the help of Abdullah, they can go to Thailand or Indo-China. . . .[69]

---

67. Shakabpa diary, entry for 18 August 1956.

68. Knaus 1999, 139.

69. Shakabpa diary, entries for 18 and 23 October 1956.

A few days later, the diary recorded that JKTS was making specific preparations to have about twenty Khambas ready to go for training, "Gyadotsang came and said: . . . We are prepared to send about 20 people, so let me know when you need them. . . . [Shakabpa said]: You should have about 20 people secretly ready, but at present things are not ready for them. You will get a reply in a month and a half."[70]

JKTS, together with the Crown Prince and Phünkang Lhajam, therefore, had been having serious contacts with the U.S. government via the consulate in Calcutta since the summer of 1956, and although they had still received neither final approval nor a departure date for exfiltration of the Khamba trainees, this must have, for good reason, seemed imminent to them.

Meanwhile, back in Washington, the CIA had started to make plans about Tibet and for the first time appointed an officer in the China Branch of the Far East Division—John Reagan—to handle Tibet issues and oversee Hoskins in Calcutta.[71] He was the first Tibet desk officer.[72]

The CIA at this time was famous for "cowboy" operations, which one analysis summed up as,

> In the 1950s the agency ran "swashbuckling" operations all over the place—toppling governments, fixing elections, buying political leaders or plotting to kill them, and sponsoring guerilla warfare. According to Weiner [author of *Legacy of Ashes*], its early leaders disdained intelligence analysis, supposedly a core mission, and CIA officers were often clueless about the countries they worked in.[73]

Al Ulmer, the Chief of the CIA's Far East Division at this time, succinctly expressed this loose style when he said, "We went all over the world and did what we wanted. . . . God we had fun."[74] Ulmer was also very interested in Tibet, as Frank Holober recalled, "Ulmer was, 'gung ho on this one.' Once he told me to make sure you keep all these records very clear because from an Agency point of view this was one of the most interesting things we have gotten involved in. He was thinking of a later Unit History kind of thing."[75]

The Tibet operation bore a lot of these characteristics in that the CIA knew virtually nothing about Tibetan society, government, culture, or key personnel,

---

70. Shakabpa diary, entry for 26 October 1956.

71. Conboy and Morrison, 2002, 35–36.

72. John Reagan, interview, USA, 1993.

73. Larry Smith, 2008, review of Legacy of Ashes: accessed at www.bahamapundit.com/2008/01/americas-cia-le.html.

74. Quoted in Weiner 2007, 144.

75. Frank Holober, interview, USA, 1993. The CIA allowed Evan Thomas to read that unit history at Langley for his book *The Very Best Men* (1995), but not to take notes. However, some time later, they refused my FOIA request to do the same. One can only wonder what the CIA is trying to protect or hide.

but on the other hand, it also differed in that it took a very cautious approach to how much and what kinds of assistance should be provided to the Tibetans. In fact, before the U.S. government would discuss supplying arms, they set up a pilot training program to assess the capabilities of the Khambas. This program—which was called "ST CIRCUS"[76]—was developed by John Reagan in late summer-fall 1956 after he had come to the conclusion that the best approach at this juncture was, as his successor Frank Holober recalled he put it, "Let's get a bunch of [Tibetan] guys together and see what comes out of this."

Having a "pilot" training program made sense of course, because at this time the CIA had no idea whether Tibetan Khambas from the "backwoods" could be trained to operate wireless equipment, learn to code and decode messages, infiltrate back into Tibet/Sichuan without being caught, collect and transmit relevant intelligence to the agency, and ultimately identify and set up drop zones for weapons, if the CIA decided to do that. Since the CIA was not going to send in their own people, if something useful was going to happen, they had to demonstrate that Khambas could get this done.

So despite considerable interest at the agency for the Tibetans' fight against the ChiComs, as the Chinese Communists were then called, neither the CIA nor the State Department saw this as a project to help Tibet secure independence from China. An undertaking to achieve a goal of that magnitude was considered technically unfeasible and strategically problematic and unwarranted, given that that the United States continued to be committed to Chiang Kai-shek on Formosa. John Reagan commented on this and the Cold War objectives of ST CIRCUS.

> Moscow and China were centers of subversion against us and it was our charge to cause them trouble. I don't think we were exploiting them [Tibetans]; our interests were just coinciding with their interests. We sympathized with their cause and so [it was] a chance to cause them [the Chinese Communists] trouble. . . .[77]

Reagan also recalled that when they were about to send the authorization for the Tibet training program, John Waller, his superior in the Far East Division, called him in and said *"We are only in this to find out information, to collect intelligence; not to support a rebellion."*[78]

Frank Holober, who took over from Reagan in mid 1957, added,

> Realistically, we thought that they were so few and couldn't use India as a staging base, so what could we really accomplish? If they would have been wildly successful, we would have been delighted. We couldn't see the end of the tunnel. We really had no final goal. We weren't really sure what we had got. All we wanted to do was to

---

[76] Conboy and Morrison 2003, 55. The "ST" refers to the China Desk.

[77] John Reagan, interview, USA, 1993.

[78] Ibid.

> secretly organize inside Tibet and find out what was going on there. It was a limited program—training a handful. . . . We dropped in some by air to collect intelligence and help organize and make contacts inside Tibet and resupplied some by air.[79]

Another CIA officer who was involved with ST CIRCUS, John Rowland, similarly discussed the limited scope of the program at this point.

> There was no way to really help a guerrilla force to fight without a tremendous commitment from the outside. Without this you can't help a lot. In Tibet's case, there was no access country before 1962 [the year of the Sino-Indian War]. The Afghanis had the Saudis, Pakistan, China and U.S. help. Air transport was hard due to the altitude of the Himalayas, and the Indians were not cooperative. . . . If you go around helping resistance movements, there is no point in doing this if there is no end goal in view and if no goal is achievable. If we wanted to go all out, we would have had to go to war with China and we were not about to get into a war over Tibet. . . . We were trying to keep the Chinese on edge. . . . I can't remember hearing or reading anything about "freeing" Tibet from China by means of paramilitary action—we would give enough so that they could harass—it was out of the question to really support the Tibetans to free Tibet.[80]

Further, Ken Knaus, the CIA Tibet project officer after 1959, commented that Frank Wisner, the head of the CIA's OPC, insisted that only a limited commitment be made:

> Frank Wisner, who was consumed by remorse at his inability to help the Hungarian rebels in November 1956 . . . insisted that no commitments be made to the Tibetans that would arouse unrealistic expectations that the United States could not fulfill. He insisted that instructions to the first six Tibetan operatives specify that their mission was limited to intelligence collection. On the basis of their reports, Washington would judge what further material assistance and training was warranted.[81]

The focus of the CIA at this initial period—November-December-January—therefore, was limited to identifying the first Khamba trainees, working out a plan to exfiltrate them from India, and setting up the training facility/program on Okinawa and Saipan Islands. Then they would assess how things turned out.

THE TIBETAN TRAINEES

The recruits for the training program were almost all from a group of twenty-seven young Khambas from Litang who had been sent to Kalimpong the previous October (1956) by Gombo Tashi, the 52-year-old leader of the Litang Khambas in

---

[79] Frank Holober, interview, USA, 1993.

[80] John Rowland, interview, USA, 1993.

[81] Ken Knaus, 2003, 68.

Lhasa. When Chushigandru, the Khamba insurgency organization, officially began in Lhasa in 1957, he was its leader.

Litang Athar was one of the twenty-seven and was also part of the first group trained by the CIA. He recalled that time in Lhasa,

> In my country, in Litang, they were fighting with the Chinese. Letters [from the Litang Monastery] were sent with messages to Lhasa . . . that said, 'We are fighting with the Chinese and the situation is very bad. The Chinese bombed us, and all the monks have become soldiers and have left for the outside. Many lamas were killed and made to suffer, so everyone has left to go to the surrounding areas and are fighting. Our Jiso [business manager] of Litang Monastery is at Lhasa, and so whatever capital funds he has should be used as the main capital. In addition to that, all of you traders should pool what you have together with that. If our Tibetan country becomes well again, we . . . will reimburse you all later. The chabu's [another kind of monastic manager] money is also our common money, so you take that and go to the outside and get help from America or Taiwan."
>
> At that time, in our minds, we were going to [Kalimpong] to contact Taiwan, since it was said that the Guomindang was the enemy of the Communists. The Tibetans had no contact with the Americans [that he knew about], and all we knew was that the Americans did not like the Communists.[82]

The experiences of Litang Athar are typical of these Khambas. He had been doing trading for his Litang Monastery and was traveling back and forth to Kham [Sichuan] on business. For example, he had come to Lhasa from Litang in January 1956, just before the fighting broke out, and then returned to Chamdo on business at Lunar New Year's time in mid February, which was when he first learned of the uprising and the death and destruction that was transpiring in Sichuan. When he returned to Lhasa soon after, he started meeting with other Khambas from Litang to discuss their homeland and what those in Lhasa could do to help them. Athar recalled:

> So all the young Litangbas in their twenties and thirties [of which he thought there were about fifty to sixty] discussed this [the fighting in Litang] and said that we all must do something, so we decided to ask Andrutsang, Gombo Tashi to help us.[83]

Another well-known Chushigandru leader from Litang, Radru Ngawang, also recalled this. "We were talking to each other, saying that we should get weapons from the Tibetan government and go to Litang to make war. . . . We should not remain like this."[84] Athar added,

> Andrutsang was not a chief (Tib. pön) in Litang. Rather, he was an influential trader who was frequently called on to mediate business disputes among Litangba traders.

---

[82] Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.05.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2002, H.0012.05.

> Andrutsang was the best one from our Litang area. [So we said to him], "Whatever consultations have to be made with the Tibetan government or whatever . . . things we should do, you must do them."
>
> Gombo Tashi told us not to do trading activities, because if we want to achieve something, we have to sacrifice our private interests. He said we should think about this, but there was nothing to think about, and from this day forward we should stop doing our trading work." All said, "Yes! From this day forward we will not go around the country doing trading." . . . When we asked Gombo Tashi what to do, he told us to buy good horses and buy as many guns and as much ammunition as possible. Even if we don't have spare guns to give to others, [he said] we should get ourselves armed well. Since we were from Kham, most of us were armed anyway. However, we bought some good ammunition and if we needed to change bad guns with good guns, we did that and got well prepared. Those who had horses had them, and those who did not, bought them.[85]

It was obvious to Gombo Tashi that to fight the Chinese a reliable source of good weapons and ammunition was needed, so he contacted the Tibetan government requesting their help, but when they told him that was impossible, he thought that perhaps Taiwan or some other foreigners might want to help, so in October 1956 he sent the twenty-seven young Litangpas to Kalimpong, where several important Litang trading families were residing, with the goal of trying to secure arms and training.[86] He had heard that there was a Chinese couple from Taiwan living in Kalimpong who were believed to be agents of Chiang Kai-shek, so they were the immediate target. Athar recalled this decision,

> Then, . . . one day Andrutsang [Gombo Tashi] said, "A group of you stay with me and another group should go to India and see if you can make contact and get help from the enemies of the communists like Taiwan . . ." We said, "All right," and formed two groups. [One group] of twenty-seven young males went to Kalimpong.[87]

The rest of the young Litang traders stayed with Gombo Tashi and helped him to start a militant organization of Khambas whose goal was explicitly to organize to fight the Chinese. Its formation will be discussed in chapter 3.

After Athar reached Kalimpong, he recalled,

> One or two of our Litang companions knew some Chinese language, so at Kalimpong, we contacted a Taiwanese Guomindang (GMD) person who was living near the Kangchen Cinema with his wife. . . . It seemed that he was working for GMD intelligence. So we spoke to him and told him our story of how we revolted against

---

[85] Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.05.

[86] The two prominent Litang families in Kalimpong were branches of the Gyadotsang and Andrutsang families. the Gyadotsang family was headed by an older monk called Gelong, and a branch of the Andrutsang family was headed by Gombo Tashi's relative, Lodrö Phüntso.

[87] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.01.

> the Chinese and fought in Kham and asked if he could help us. He said that that what we were doing was excellent and that he would inform Taiwan about everything. So he took some photographs and wrote down our whole story. We were sort of happy, thinking that if Taiwan could help with arms and then parachute us into Kham, that would be very beneficial. . . . So the plan was that we were going to Taiwan and then we were going to ask them to parachute us into Kham and give us arms so we could fight the Chinese.[88]

The government of Chiang Kai-shek quickly decided to help, and through their agent in Kalimpong, told the young Khambas that they should all get ready to leave soon for training. However, very soon after this was agreed to, the Americans entered the picture when Taktse Rinpoche came to Kalimpong from America bringing, as mentioned above, John Reagan, the CIA's Tibet Project officer.

Taktse Rinpoche had been living in the United States and informally advising the CIA about Tibet when they had questions. In early November 1956, when word reached him that his brother, the Dalai Lama, had been allowed to visit India for the Buddha Jayanti, he immediately made plans to go to meet him and his other brother Gyalo Thondup. JKTS arranged an Indian visa for him through their GOI contacts, so he was able to leave quickly. He recalled how he came to bring Reagan with him.

> They [CIA] were asking [me] if people [Tibetans] could be trained and whether there were people [available]. . . . I told them, "I am going [to India] so one of you should come. I can't make the decisions, so you should come and talk with Gyalo Thondup and Shakabpa [of JKTS] and Gyadotsang. If you speak with them, they can definitely make the decisions and tell you what people you need." So at that time I went with one CIA man to India and I introduced him to Shakabpa and Gyalo Thondup . . . telling him who is who and what they [the Americans] were going to do. That's all. I was not in their group [JKTS] nor was I in the CIA group. . . . In this way, the connection was made. At Kalimpong there was Shakabpa. In Tibet there was Phala. And I was in America. So back and forth, that is how it was discussed.[89]

About this time the CIA began to deal exclusively with Gyalo Thondup, for whom they established an account of USD 180,000 a year to be used any way he saw fit.[90] The main task at this time was finding appropriate candidates for the CIA's training program. Gyalo Thondup had no contact with the Khambas but knew the Gyadotsang family because they had come to meet and talk with JKTS in August 1956 when they first arrived from Kham to Kalimpong, and it was they who told Gyalo Thondup about the young Khambas sent by Gombo Tashi. They also told Gyalo that these youths were making arrangements to go to Taiwan for training, so Gyalo Thondup quickly intervened and persuaded them to stall accepting Taiwan's offer and wait for what he told them was a "bigger" country that he would arrange to give them better training. Litang Athar explained this,

---

[88] Ibid.

[89] Taktse Rinpoche, interview, USA, 1993, H.0071.01 and H.0071.03.

[90] Holober, the head of the CIA's Tibet Project, stated this in an interview that was quoted in Dunham 2004, 216–17. Holober was talking about when he became head of the Tibet Project in 1957 and said, "I think we were already giving out $180,000 a year to Gyalo Thondup, who had set up an account. The financial people handled that. They put it into an account to do whatever he wanted with it and we trusted him to do the right thing."

> One day Gyalo Thondup [contacted us young Khambas]. I don't know how he knew about us, but he knew that we had come to Kalimpong. Most probably he had learned this from the Gyadotsang family. . . .
>
> So one day, this Gyalo Thondup, who was a relative of the Dalai Lama, told us to meet him. We were told he was going to come [to Kalimpong from Darjeeling where he lived] and see us the next day and that we all should not go anywhere and should wait to meet him. I really don't know how this message came to us since we were just young men hanging out and roaming around Kalimpong. . . . So I was just walking around when the message came. Alright, we thought. So the next day we went to Jayangshar the home of Khenjung [one of the principals in JKTS]. . . .
>
> Then a black car drove around to the back of the house and it was said that it was Gyalo Thondup. We had never met him, so we shook hands. He said he was glad to meet us and also glad that after what had happened to our country and having come to a foreign land that we were so determined and that we had taken a vow to work for our country. He said, "I will do whatever I can so as not to disappoint you." So we thanked him. He asked us what our thoughts were, and we told him that we were thinking of going to Taiwan and that they had told us that they agreed to train us and drop us in Kham and supply us with arms.
>
> Then Gyalo said, "Taiwan can't even look after itself and they are relying on the Americans, so if you go to Taiwan it will not be useful. Instead, I will try and arrange for you to be sent to America.[91] So if it is possible to go to America, then you should do your best to go there as this will be beneficial now as well as in the future." So we all were rather glad. . . . and said thank you and made the decision right there.
>
> After explaining to Gyalo about our contacts with the Chinese [from Taiwan], he told us not to have any more contact with him, so we said okay and when this Chinese man tried to contact us, we avoided him. Now what to do? My friend was telling me that this Chinese man was not at all leaving him alone and was asking him to come. So we had no choice but run away (avoid him).[92]

In retrospect, because the Americans actually gave the Khamba insurgents (Chushigandru) only an insignificant amount of weapons before the 1959 Uprising, and poor-quality weapons at that, it might have been far better for the insurgency had those Khambas gone to Taiwan. But the Khambas believed the Dalai Lama's brother and were willing to wait for his connections to finalize.

---

[91] Another Litang Khamba closely involved in this, correctly explained that Gyalo Thondup did not specifically say America, but only mentioned an extremely powerful nation. Gyalo Thondup's dealings with the U.S. government were secret, so he would never have mentioned the United States to these young and wild Khambas (Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.05).

[92] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.001.

In December 1956, the training plans moved forward when Gyalo Thondup was told by the CIA to secure detailed biographical information and photos of the potential Khamba trainees. The youths were then with the Dalai Lama in Bodhgaya acting as unofficial bodyguards, so he sent his brother Taktse Rinpoche there to collect this information from them.[93] Litang Athar recalled Taktse's arrival,

> A. When we got to Bodhgaya, Taktse Rinpoche came. We were staying by the gates of the Chinese temple. He took photos and wrote our stories.
>
> Q. A story on each person?
>
> A. Yes, on each person. Like where are you from and what happened in your country. He said such things have happened to your country and you have suffered so much and so don't lose heart. We will see what can be done. So there were the two brothers of the Dalai Lama there and we were happy.
>
> Q. Did Taktse Rinpoche say anything about U.S. assistance?
>
> A. Nothing. He only said that they were going to get help. So when this happened, we were sort of content. Then we were told to leave Bodhgaya and go back to Kalimpong [to be on hand to go for training when the final word came from Washington].[94]

The actual exfiltration and training of these Khambas will be discussed in chapter 3.

THE DALAI LAMA RETURNS TO LHASA

Despite this progress, it is not surprising that America's commitment to Tibet at this time was too little to tip the scales in favor of the Dalai Lama staying in exile. The United States had made no commitment to anything more than training a few Khambas at this juncture, and even that had not actually started at the end of 1956, when the Dalai Lama had to make his decision whether or not to leave India. The Americans had not said that they would provide significant financial, political, and military aid, let alone made a firm commitment of such support, so a decision to enter exile would have been based only on the *hope* that the U.S. connection would grow and would ultimately result in large-scale support.

In addition, the Dalai Lama felt that what was really essential for Tibet was not a few guns or training for some Khambas, but an active U.S. commitment to support internationally the right of Tibet to exist free from China or at least to officially recognize a Tibetan government-in-exile headed by the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama, in an interview, mentioned this:

---

[93] One of these, Lotse, wrote, "Twenty-two young Khambas in new traditional robes with swords, etc, were funded by Gyadotsang Gelong [really organized by JKTS] to travel to Delhi to be there when the Dalai Lama arrived, and then to accompany him as unofficial bodyguards. As a result, they were with him in Bodhgaya. (Blo tshe [Lotse] 2001, 5).

[94] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.05. Taktse did, however, tell everything to Phala, who said that is good and he would help (Taktse, interview, USA, 1996, H.0071.03).

> Q. It seems there was considerable concrete support from the U.S. at that time. People had come from Washington to India and it had even gone so far that pictures had been taken of the people who were being proposed for going for training. There was no guarantee [of support], but there was a lot going on by your two brothers, Gyalo Thondup and Taktse Rinpoche, so I wonder why that didn't seem enough [for you to stay]
>
> A. Hmm. [Pause] Training a few people and a few rifles was not much. Not sufficient. Then when I was here [in India], my two brothers very much insisted that now I should not return. Then again when we discussed what real concrete support [there was] then *perhaps the possibility of training might have been mentioned,* but I did not remember very clearly, and anyway at that time I also have the fifty-fifty [approach]. This side says now this is the only opportunity to remain [in exile] and I saw that their side also had their reasons. But also Ngabö's suggestion [that] unless there is something very definite, then it is very dangerous [for Tibet] to stay here—that view also I feel is very logical. So till the last moment I did not finalize. . . .
>
> Q. What would have changed your mind? . . . How much would the Americans have had to offer to make it seem worthwhile?
>
> A. Such things as immediately bringing the case before the UN and doing something strong like immediately accepting a formal government in exile in India. Sending troops to Tibet as in Kuwait would have been difficult, but they could have said that Tibet is independent, and if we couldn't establish an exile government in India, they would accept to establish it in America. At that time Thailand and America had good relations and Pakistan had also. If they had done that—accepted an exile government and brought the issue to the UN at once, that would have been a lot. And give training to some people.[95]

The Dalai Lama answered similarly in another interview:

> It would have been very difficult to send soldiers for us, but something like establishing an exile government that countries would recognize. Then we would have obtained a permanent basis to stay outside, which would become a challenge to the Chinese at all times. Sending some weapons into Tibet sometimes was nothing to be amazed at.[96]

The U.S. government, as was seen, was nowhere near being willing to provide that level of support. Thus, given the enormous stakes involved, in the end, the

---

[95] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.06. (English uncorrected). The Dalai Lama and most of the Tibetan elite did not understand clearly that the United States, like Britain and India, only recognized Tibetan autonomy under Chinese suzerainty.

[96] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1994, H.0019.05.

Dalai Lama was unwilling to stay in exile and risk provoking Mao to implement democratic reforms and end traditional Tibet. So in mid February 1957, the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet, despite the entreaties of his brothers, JKTS, most of his senior entourage officials such as Phala and Kalön Surkhang, and representatives of the people's associations in Kalimpong. The Dalai Lama left India intending to follow Nehru's advice that the most viable future for Tibet was for him to work with the Chinese, but henceforth to be more active and assertive in exercising his rights under the Seventeen-Point Agreement to maintain Tibetan autonomy within the PRC. Given Mao's 4 September instructions, this should have been easy to accomplish, since Mao and the Central Committee had resigned themselves to wait, if need be, for many years until conditions became ripe for implementing democratic reforms.

However, this was not easy to accomplish, because the Dalai Lama had more on his mind than simply going back to Tibet and focusing completely on working with the Chinese to carry out the Seventeen-Point Agreement. Other significant factors and feelings were pulling the Dalai Lama to continue to look favorably at the efforts of those who were actively opposing the Chinese and trying to end Chinese rule over Tibet. An example of this was a new alliance between the Tibetan government and the resistance members living in Kalimpong.

A NEW ALLIANCE

On 15 January 1957, the Kashag convened a large meeting of Tibet government officials and representatives of the People's Association / JKTS in the Grand Hotel in Calcutta, at which they conveyed the Dalai Lama's decision to return to Tibet. Surkhang, as the senior kalön, spoke for the government and announced that the Dalai Lama had decided to return to Lhasa, but quickly qualified that, explaining that the assembled officials and representatives should not be disappointed, because in the future things in Tibet would be very different. On the one hand, he told them that the Kashag henceforth would talk forcefully with the Chinese about the main issues that the people's representatives in India were concerned about, for example, no reforms and no changes to religion. On the other hand, he said that the Kashag would now also work with the "people" (Tib. mimang) in India. This was a break from the past, when the People's Association and the Kashag not only had no relations, but the Kashag did not recognize the People's Association as having a valid political voice in Tibetan politics. In the future, Kalön Surkhang said, the government—the Kashag—and the people's representatives in India would become allies and work together toward the common goal of furthering Tibetan interests and autonomy.[97] For the first time in the three-hundred-year existence of

[97] Alo Chöndze, interview, USA, 1993, H.0004.03.

Ganden Podrang—the Dalai Lama's government—the Dalai Lama and the Kashag had decided to let the "people" participate actively in Tibetan political life!

What is particularly significant about this is the fact that this new strategy was happening with the knowledge and approval of the Dalai Lama, as he explained:

> In 1956 we came to India, and when I returned, we discussed it. We agreed to start a secret organization. . . . Chemmo [Phala], Surkhang, and [Kalön] Ragashag were to return with me to Tibet and work from there. [Kalön] Yuthok, Trunyichemmo [Angula], JKTS, and Lukhang[98] were to stay in India and work from there. This was not something public, but internally it was formally done [like this]. We made an organization, [and] the personnel were assigned with each taking various responsibilities [some stayed in India and some returned to Tibet to work]. . . .
>
> Q: So you knew that, right?
>
> A: Yes. That I knew fully. Not only that, but the formal training [of the Khambas] by the Americans—that talk was beginning then. Previous to that, nothing was clear [about what the Americans would do].
>
> Q: So from 1956, the tactic was to work from the outside with the Americans. The government knew of the American support, right?
>
> A: Yes. Could one say that the government knew? What should one say?
>
> Q: That Your Holiness knew about it and so did Lord Chamberlain Phala.
>
> A: Yes. I knew about it. . . .
>
> Q: If one is writing a book, we can't just write just what we think. We have to quote.
>
> A: That's right. The source must be correct. Chemmo [Phala] at that time had fully sacrificed himself. He himself understood the risks. He knew that it was only a matter of time before the Chinese would come to know and probably kill him. He is absolutely such a dedicated person, poor fellow.[99]

The Dalai Lama also said,

> It was mainly Lord Chamberlain [Phala]. One would have to say it was sort of a secret organization. It was as if I acknowledged it internally, but not publicly. Mainly it was Chemmo. Poor fellow. They met—JKTS, Yuthok, and Angula—[and] they were to work from India. And in Tibet, Surkhang, Ragashag, and Chemmo were to do the work. . . . So I know a bit of what Chemmo was doing. He tells me. But, fearing that I would have difficulties, there are matters he did not tell me. Chemmo was the main person. . . .[100]
>
> So, since there was already a group—JKTS—actively engaged in work [in Kalimpong-Darjeelng]. We said, Okay, so you must continue to take the responsibility [in India]. . . . We said, You continue your work, and we will do what we can from

---

98. Lukhangwa had been given permission by the Chinese to go on pilgrimage to India, and the TWC actually assisted with transportation. He arrived in Gangtok when the Dalai Lama had arrived there on his way back.

99. Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1994, H.0019.03.

100. Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1993, H.0019.02.

> Tibet. . . . There were quite a few who said that they are not going to return to Tibet, but will remain. So if they were staying, then we said it would be good to . . . have relations with each other [Lhasa and Kalimpong/Darjeeling]. So that's how it was.[101]

Thus, a new secret arrangement was created in India with the Dalai Lama's knowledge and approval, in which the anti-Chinese resistance organizations in India would work together with the Tibetan government (Kashag) using two identical codebooks that had been created so that Lhasa and JKTS could communicate secretly by telegram. One of these codebooks was left with Shakabpa, the other was taken back to Lhasa for the Kashag by Ragashag.

Consequently, in contrast to Mao and the Central Committee who had instructed Fan Ming and the TWC in the 9/4 cable to stop trying to implement reforms and to continue the gradualist policy, the Dalai Lama was pursuing a conflicted policy that sought to work closely and cordially with the Chinese, but at the same time covertly was providing encouragement and support for the anti-Chinese resistance forces. The Dalai Lama intellectually accepted Nehru's advice that it would be suicidal for him to try to confront the Chinese militarily and that his best option was to accept Chinese sovereignty and work within the PRC, using the Seventeen-Point Agreement to maintain a high degree of internal autonomy for himself and his government. But at the same time, emotionally and intellectually, the Dalai Lama was unwilling to give up the deep-seated hope that Tibet would once again become independent. Therefore, he was sympathetic and appreciative of the activities of resistance forces such as JKTS, the Khambas, and his own Lord Chamberlain Phala, and felt he should allow them to do their work to see where that led. Thus, he was *unwilling to do anything serious to suppress them,* even though they were trying to undermine his cooperation with the Chinese.

The Dalai Lama, in a sense, was trying to pursue two contradictory policies. Consequently, when the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet, he was going to have to pursue a policy that would be trying to finesse both of these at once and would therefore concentrate on neither completely. For example, when the Dalai Lama left to return to Lhasa, he did not order the resistance Tibetans to stop their anti-Chinese activities. As we saw, to the contrary, he was part of the plan to create a new alliance. The Dalai Lama apparently believed that so long as he was not actively directing the resistance forces, he could covertly support their goals, while acting with the Chinese as if he were committed to Tibet being a part of China. The Dalai Lama explained this approach by means of a well-known traditional Tibetan saying.

> The hill over there has no dung.
> The hill over here has no carrying baskets.[102]

---

[101] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1994, H.0019.03.

[102] In Tibetan: pha ri lji ba med pa/ tshur ri sle po med pa.

When asked what this meant, the Dalai Lama explained,

> That meaning is easy. [If I stayed in exile] The relation with China would be cut off and you depart from your own country. In the meantime, [in exile if] you completely fail to receive help from there, that is like the proverb, 'The hill over there has no dung. The hill over here has no carrying baskets.' If [assistance in exile was] definite, complete support here, then it would have been worthwhile to make an enemy of China. But if you fail to get support here, then you have made an enemy of China and have nothing [in either place]. So it is better to return.[103]

Consequently, the Dalai Lama's strategy was not to put all his eggs in one basket but instead to keep viable options on both hills—work with the Chinese but not with 100 percent commitment, while also quietly supporting the resistance forces or at least not trying to suppress them, also not with 100 percent commitment. So if the Chinese side decided to forcibly implement reforms, the resistance side was still operating, or conversely, if the resistance side petered out, you still had your relations with the Chinese side. This balancing act was manageable when the resistance forces were far away in Kalimpong and were not doing much in Tibet, but, as will be seen in coming chapters, it became unworkable when the main resistance force was the Sichuan Khambas operating in Lhasa and in nearby Lhoka.

In any case, the new "alliance" was short-lived and was actually terminated by Ragashag on the way back in Shigatse, even before the Dalai Lama reached Lhasa. Li Zuomin, a Tibetan-speaking senior Han cadre, explained how Ragashag contacted him and turned over the secret codebook:

> On the way home, at Shigatse, before Ragashag's death [there], he called me and asked me to arrange an interview with the head of the welcome delegation that had just come from the Tibet Working Committee [in Lhasa]. Ragashag said he has a very important thing to tell him. When he met him, Ragashag gave him the Kashag's secret telegram [codebook] and explained . . . that in order to trick them [the resistance members in India so that they would not try to stop the Dalai Lama from returning], we made this secret telegram code, since otherwise they would have blocked our return, which would have made things more difficult and complicated. However, before we used it, I am giving it to you.[104]

Ragashag further explained that the codebook's seals had never been broken, because the Kashag had never intended to use the book. He told them that this was all just a ruse to allow the Dalai Lama to return without having to face problems

---

103. Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.06. English uncorrected.
104. Li Zuomin, interview, Beijing, 2009, H.0053.03.

from the resistance members in Kalimpong.[105] However, given what the Dalai Lama has said about this, that seems unlikely, and there is an alternative explanation for Ragashag's action that seems more probable. Alo Chöndze, one of the People's Association leaders in Kalimpong, explained that Ragashag turned over the codebook because Shakabpa had broken the [internal Tibetan] agreement that this was to be completely secret when he unilaterally sent a leaflet about the new alliance all over Tibet. Alo Chöndze said,

> Shakabpa printed a leaflet/flyer which told about the Dalai Lama coming to India and about how the People's Associations and the Kashag have now united, so the Tibetans in Tibet and [the Tibetans] in India are now harmonious. It was written nicely. It also mentioned the oath the Kashag took [regarding this]. Shakabpa wrote it [the flyer], but it was signed in the name of JKTS's political organization, the Dedön tsogpa. At this time the Dalai Lama was in Gangtok, where he had to stay for a while [due to snow on the pass to Tibet]. . . . So it [Shakabpa's flyer] was distributed [in Tibet] before [the Dalai Lama reached Lhasa]. He turned us over [to the Chinese by publicly revealing this secret arrangement].
>
> [Consequently, after the Kashag returned] we were waiting in Kalimpong for an answer from the Kashag; however, none arrived for one month and then for a second month. We waited [in India] to hear some news about this, but no answer or message came. The Kashag wasn't able to do [what it had sworn to us it would do] with the Chinese. This was because Shakabpa's letter had been distributed throughout [Tibet].
>
> Later in 1959, when the Dalai Lama, Phala, and Surkhang had come to India, I asked Surkhang about this: "You gave guarantees to the 'people' about doing something tough with the Chinese and then you didn't do it. Why?" He explained to me, "Before we reached Lhasa, Shakabpa's leaflet had already arrived. Because of this, the Chinese summoned me and said, 'Were you going to India for religion, or was it to associate with those bad people?'" So because of this, they [the kalöns] were afraid, and they weren't able to do what they said.[106]

The covert alliance between the Tibetan government and the resistance forces in Kalimpong, therefore, did not last even until the Dalai Lama reached Lhasa. However, Chinese knowledge of this codebook and alliance did not change Chinese policy toward the Dalai Lama and the Kashag, because at that time, Mao was in the midst of implementing an even more decisive step to end Fan Ming's plans for reforms in Tibet by completely dismantling the work that Fan Ming had done toward that end during the second half of 1956.

---

[105] Months later, the Indian officials stationed in their consulate in Lhasa finally learned of this and notified Apa Pant, the POS, who notified JKTS. Shakabpa's diary entry for 28 January 1958 confirms this as follows: "Bose came and said that when he went to Gangtok on the fifteenth, the POS told him, 'Regarding the secret codebook for communications between Jenkhentsisum and the Kashag, the latter had to hand the book over to the Chinese. This information was wired [to me] by our Indian representative in Lhasa, and he told me to tell this to them [JKTS]. Since nobody is staying [right now] in Kalimpong, I am telling you [to tell them when they return]. Bose asked, "Who else has the secret wireless codebook . . . and why did the Kashag hand over the book?" I [Shakabpa] replied, "No one else has a copy. We made this connection with the Kashag so they could convey information immediately when they speak with the Chinese. But internally there aren't any [copies]."

[106] Alo Chöndze, interview, USA, 1993, H.0004.03.

MAO'S "GREAT CONTRACTION" AND "GREAT DISCONTINUANCE"

Despite the arrival of the 4 September 1956 instructions from the Central Committee, Fan Ming was still unwilling to give up his reform plans completely, so he tried to circumvent the instructions and continue some of his work. For example, in February 1957, the TWC's overall plan for 1957 paid lip service to the 4 September instructions, but ended saying: "The working committee (TWC) proposes in 1957 to adopt the following policy, 'Reasonable reductions and consolidations *with careful and stable advancement.*'"[107] In other words, the plans for the coming year would have still allowed Fan Ming to continue to advance his plans to implement reforms.

However, by this time it had become obvious in Beijing that words from Beijing would not be enough, so Mao took more drastic steps to impose his views on Fan Ming and the TWC by again instructing Deng Xiaoping to have the Central Secretariat convene a major meeting in Beijing about the work in Tibet. That meeting started on 5 March 1957 and was headed by Deng Xiaoping, who was then the general secretary of the Central Committee's Secretariat and a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo. It was attended by all the leading TWC cadres including Fan Ming.[108] After many sessions, a final resolution document was submitted to the Central Committee on 19 March and was officially approved by the Politburo on 14 May 1957. It totally reversed Fan Ming's plans and took democratic reforms in Tibet off the table for the foreseeable future: definitely for the next six years, and likely also for the next five years after that if conditions were not ripe then, and more after that if needed.[109] As the Dalai Lama said, Zhou had mentioned fifty years in their meeting in India, and Deng Xiaoping, at a small meeting with Zhang Guohua and three other Politburo members in Beijing in early 1957 to discuss reforms in Tibet, said,

---

[107] Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui, eds., 1990, entry for [no date cited] February 1957.

[108] Attending from the TWC were Zhang Jingwu, Zhang Guohua, Fan Ming, Zhou Renshan, Wang Qimei, Ya Hanzhang, and Mu Shengzhong (Ibid., entry for 5 March 1957).

[109] For a detailed discussion of the Great Contraction–Great Discontinuance, see Goldstein 2014, 445–66.

> According to the Chairman [Mao] no reforms in the twentieth century. . . . No reforms for several decades or for fifty to one hundred years . . . This is based on [the model of] the Far East Republic. . . . Even if the 1.2 million serfs remain [in Tibet], this will not affect our socialist construction [in the rest of China]. Leave the Tibetan currency and the Tibetan army alone. We should make an agreement with them—we give them some money and let them do the work. Even if they embezzle all the money, leave them alone. . . . In Tibet, it [reforms] will take decades.[110]

The official 14 May document, which embodied what is popularly called the "Great Contraction" (Ch. da shousuo) and the "Great Discontinuance" (Ch. da xiama), is extremely important because it not only lays out much of the rationale behind Mao's gradualist policy but also offers a rare look at Mao and the Central Committee's thinking on Sino-Tibetan history and Tibet's uniqueness.

> THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE BASICALLY AGREES WITH THE "TWC'S DECISIONS ON OUR WORK IN TIBET" AND THE "THE PLAN FOR SIMPLIFYING THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND REDUCING THE COST" THAT WERE PROPOSED BY THE TWC ON MARCH 19TH 1957.
>
> Democratic reforms in Tibet are one of the most important items in the Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet and have to be carried out sooner or later. Only through democratic reforms can Tibetans achieve political and economic liberation, and acquire the prerequisites to transition to a socialist [society]. However, since the time when this issue [of democratic reforms] was raised at the inaugural meeting of the PCTAR last year, the opinions generated by this among people from all walks of life have demonstrated that it is not the right time for carrying out democratic reforms in Tibet. Not only does it lack true consent from the leaders of the elite, but it lacks support from the masses. After democratic reforms started in the Tibetan areas in Sichuan, a portion of the elite in Tibet openly or privately supported the rebels in Ganzi [Ch. Jiangdong] using the excuse of "errors made doing the reforms in Ganzi," and launched or expanded armed rebellions in Chamdo. During the Dalai Lama's visit to India, separatists carried out the so-called "Tibet Independence" campaign instigated by imperialists, which has garnered sympathy and approval among a relatively large number of aristocrats and upper-class lamas. In today's Tibet, the separatists are still quite popular and can still stir up troubles on the issue of reforms.

The document goes on to discuss, in a remarkably nuanced manner, the underlying historical and social causes of the attitudes of Tibetans.

---

[110] In Chinese: an zhuxi shuo nian shiji bugai. . . . shushinian, wushi dao yibainian bugai. . . . zheyang gao jiyu yuandong gongheguo banfa. . . . liuxia zhe yibai nian wan renkou wei nongnu ye buneng fanghai wo shehuizhuyi jianshe. zangchao, zangjun buyao guan. women geita tiaoyue—bangzhu ruogan qian, youta gao. quanbu tanwu le ye bu guanta. . . . xizang shi shushinian gaode. DPRC. "The record of the conversation of the Central Committee leaders when receiving Zhang Guohua," n.d.

This is not accidental. Rather, it has its historical and social causes. Although Tibet became an inseparable part of China a long time ago, it has maintained an independent or semi-independent status [Ch. duli huozhe ban duli] in its relations with the motherland. The unification of Tibet was achieved during Qianlong's reign [1736–1795] in the Qing dynasty. Nevertheless, during the forty years between the Xinhai Revolution [of 1911 overthrowing the Qing Dynasty] and the peaceful liberation of Tibet, Tibet once again restored its semi-independent status while maintaining a nominal subordination to the Beiyang Government and the Guomingdang Administration as local to central administrations.[111]

The fact that it had achieved long-term independence and semi-independence historically distinguishes Tibet from other minority nationality areas in China. First of all, this fact is reflected in Tibetans' centrifugal tendencies away from China and their distrust of Han Chinese. Not only does this exist widely among the upper classes, but also has a considerable influence among the masses. When the imperialist forces penetrated into Tibet toward the end of the nineteenth century, they instigated distrust between Tibet and China, nurtured pro-independence forces, and created an impetus for separation, all of which exacerbated the Tibetans' centrifugal tendencies away from the motherland. These imperialist conspiratorial activities have continued until today, even after the peaceful liberation of Tibet. Historically, the tendency to separation among Tibetans has to do with the oppression of a minority nationality, but generally speaking, the tendency more importantly reflects the independent or semi-independent status of Tibet that existed for a long period of time in history. Religion has a long and great influence among the Tibetan people, and the elite Tibetans use religion to maintain the serf system and the feudal governing system.

Serfdom and feudal rule in Tibet have remained intact until now. The upper classes still retain the ethnic banner and the religious banner, and they can still use these banners to influence the masses in order to maintain the old system and rule that are harmful for the development of Tibetans. This is the reality we are facing. Besides the issues with the upper classes, we also have the issues with the masses. When we do work in Tibet, this reality is the first thing we need to consider for doing our work. The Tibetans will not make progress without social reforms, but due to the reality we are faced with, we must carry out peaceful reforms and apply the policy of peaceful reforms to our decisions regarding the timing, the sequential steps, and the methods of the reforms. The democratic reforms that we advocate, no matter how peaceful they are, will inevitably touch the foundation of feudalism, because the main goal [of democratic reform] is to transform the system of Tibetan serfdom into a people's democratic Tibet [Ch. renmin minzhu de Xizang].

If we do reforms without the genuine consent of the elite leaders and the necessary support of the masses, it will become imposed, and it will rely only on us to carry out the reforms. This is contrary to the principle of, "Allow sufficient time for

---

[111] Goldstein 1989 demonstrates that there was no "nominal subordination" of Tibet from 1913 to 1951.

> the masses of all nationalities and the public leaders who are connected to the masses of all nationalities to consider things and make a decision based on their own wishes" (from the report regarding the draft constitution of the PRC). It is also contrary to Point 11 of the Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet.
>
> If we use force, it is very likely that it will create a situation in which not only the majority of the elite will oppose us but also the separatists' conspiracies will succeed, the leftists will be isolated, and a considerable portion of the working class will follow the elite to oppose us under their influence and control [the upper classes]. Therefore, peaceful reforms will be impossible to achieve. If this situation occurs, it will either force us to stop reforms and place us in a passive political situation, or we will need to start a war to mobilize the masses and thus implement reforms. This [going to war] is the last resort in nationality areas. In Tibet, because of the above-mentioned historical and practical reasons, together with its geographical isolation from inland China and the inconvenience of transportation, carrying out reforms in this way [without the consent and support from the elite and masses] is politically passive and militarily not worthwhile in the long term. Therefore, we should avoid adopting this way.
>
> [However,] if imperialists and traitors start an armed rebellion, that is something different and then we have to use armed force to suppress the rebellion. The Central Committee had made repeated instructions about this.

The document then lays out the consequences of this situation for the work in Tibet.

> Having reconsidered the historical and current situations in Tibet, the Central Committee has decided that we will not carry out democratic reforms in Tibet for at least six years [i.e., during the Second Five-Year Plan], or even longer. Whether or not to carry out reforms after six years pass [i.e., during the Third Five-Year Plan, 1963–67] will be decided by us based on the actual situation at that time.
>
> To not carry out reforms for six years is a compromise with the elite in Tibet. This compromise is necessary, because the elite still holds the nationality banner and the religion banner, which could still influence the masses as mentioned above. This compromise is not to reduce the whole work nor to give up our positive goals. *On the contrary, the reason to compromise [now] is exactly in order to create advantageous conditions to achieve positive goals in the future.* In Tibet, we will not carry out reforms for at least six years, but the peaceful reforms in Sichuan and Yunnan should be continued and completed. These are the policies of the Central Committee.
>
> In the past, some of the Tibetan elite have opposed democratic reforms in the Tibetan areas in Sichuan, and it is likely that they would raise further objections to the reforms there. Regarding their opinions, *we should seriously clarify and explain to them that the State Council has decided that the Tibetans within the TAR, including Chamdo, have the right to manage their internal affairs based on the historical situation of Tibet. However the other Tibetan areas have a different historical background and belong to other provinces.* Autonomous regions have also been established in these areas, and thus the internal affairs of these regions should

be managed by their own people. The democratic reforms in the Sichuan Tibetan areas are carried out based on the actual situation and the will of the people there. Consequently, the Tibetans in Tibet should not interfere with the democratic reforms in the Sichuan Tibetan areas based on the example of Tibet.

For at least the next six years, our work in Tibet can be classified into "dos" [Ch. kewei] and "don'ts" [Ch. bu kewei]. For the "dos," we should carry them out appropriately. For the "don'ts," we should resolutely stop them immediately.

It seems now that what we can do and should do is:

1. Continue to carry out united front work with the elite, with a primary focus on working on the group around the Dalai Lama.

2. Continue to train and develop (nurture) Tibetan cadres. Besides training some locally and giving them work locally, we can also take in a few youths and send them to inland China to school.

3. Continue to do projects that we are capable of doing and that are welcomed by the masses, approved by the elite, and have beneficial influence on the masses.

4. Continue to place the national defense, foreign affairs, and road management, etc., under the administration of the Central Committee.

5. Through appropriate measures, carry out education on patriotism among the elite and the masses, and oppose separatist activities.

On the other hand, we should firmly adhere to the four "don'ts":

1. Stopping and terminating preparatory work on democratic reforms.[112]

2. Do not interfere with Tibet's internal affairs.

3. Do not enroll Party members from the general society [refers to people who don't belong to offices or groups like the Youth League].

4. Do not do projects that are not urgently requested and [do not] have the consent of the upper and lower classes in Tibet.

. . . The TWC's plan to downsize the administrative structure and reduce expenditures should be realized quickly and resolutel*y.* In this way, our work will be more practical and appropriate for the actual situation in Tibet. At the same time, it will lower the guard of Tibetans vis-à-vis Han Chinese to the greatest extent [make them more receptive] and lessen the tension in Tibet. These will enable us to carry out the things that we can and should do. During this period, if the elite do some bad things, leave them alone for now. This may actually be a good, real education for the Tibetan people.

Since the peaceful liberation of Tibet, we have achieved some success in our work in Tibet, and to a certain degree have improved the relationship between Tibet and the Central Committee, changed Tibetan's opinions toward China, and developed patriotism gradually. All this proves that we can still do some work efficiently based on the Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, even when the serf system is not changed. Progress is slow, but given some time we will achieve our goals. On the other hand, we should know that not

---

[112] Although this seems like a "do" in English, it means do not do preparatory work on democratic reforms. [Ch. tingzhi he jieshu minzhu gaige de zhunbei gongzuo].

> everything will go smoothly in Tibet during this period. This is because the fundamental improvement of the relations between different nationalities depends on the complete liberation of the working classes in every nationality.
>
> Before the realization of the reform of the society, at least before the realization of democratic reforms, there will always be separatists and they will always carry out conspiracies to divide the motherland. The imperialists will always try to find every opportunity to stir up trouble. Of course, so long as we can adhere to the political guidelines and policies mentioned above and militarily can keep due vigilance, the imperialists and their running dogs can hardly stir up a large-scale rebellion in Tibet. And even if they succeed, we are sure that we can put down the rebellion. Our comrades should fully realize these possibilities and generally remain clear-headed. In this way, we will keep our vigilance and will not panic if something [bad] happens. As a result, all the PLA soldiers, Party members, Youth league members and all cadres must conduct very difficult work under these complex and difficult conditions in Tibet. [We] would like to ask the TWC to give our best wishes to them. From now on, the TWC should do a better job solidifying unity among the Party members, Youth league members, PLA commanders, and all staff, in order to overcome all the difficulties and realize the Central Committee's policies and instructions. The TWC's plan to downsize the administrative structure and reduce expenditures should be realized quickly and resolutely.
>
> According to the situation in Tibet, it is decided that the leadership in Tibet should be centralized in order to strengthen the Party's leadership. All work in Tibet should be administered directly by the Central Committee. No ministries or departments of the Central Committee and State Council should directly give instructions regarding work in Tibet or the transferring of cadres. If they do so, the TWC has the right to refuse.
>
> *Central Committee*
> *14 May 1957*[113]

To ensure that these changes were implemented promptly and completely, Beijing sent Zhang Guohua, the real First Secretary of the TWC and also the Commander of the PLA forces in Tibet, back to Lhasa to take charge in March. And he did. In the next few months Zhang Guohua sent back the overwhelming majority of the new Han and Tibetan cadres that had been recruited by Fan Ming. A total of 8,590 Han cadres and 4,832 Han workers were sent back to inland China, while only 1,252 Han cadres and 545 Han workers were kept in Tibet. For Tibetan cadres, about 6,000 were dismissed and only 2,000 were kept, of which 1,000 were to be sent to school in inland China. In addition, most new offices in the PCTAR were eliminated or drastically reduced in size, as were party and TWC branch offices.[114]

---

113. DPRC. "Central Committee's Instructions on the 'TWC's Decisions on our future work in Tibet,'" dated 14 May 1957 (emphasis added). This had been approved by the Politburo.

114. DPRC. "Transcript of the meeting in the Secretariat of the Central Committee held on 6 March 1957."

The 4 September 1956 and 14 May 1957 documents together reveal clearly that the postponement of land and class reforms in Tibet was not done because Mao thought that the Chinese position in Tibet was too weak and insecure to force reforms, as is most commonly asserted in Western histories of this period. To the contrary, at the time of the 4 September 1956 instructions, the two major motor highways from Lhasa to inland China had been in operation since December 1954, and an airport had been opened on 31 May 1956. In addition, within Tibet there were over 4,000 km of motor roads in use from Chamdo in the east to Gartok in the west, and from Nagchuka in the north to Yadong in the south.[115] Consequently, the Chinese in Tibet were able to obtain supplies and reinforcements from inland China if they were needed. In fact, the situation was seen as so stable that the 14 May instructions reduced the number of PLA troops in Tibet to only 13,000.[116]

Rather, Mao implemented the great contraction to not only stop Fan Ming but also create the conditions wherein China could obtain a long-term strategic advantage in Tibet. It reflected his belief that China's national interests were served best not by replacing Tibet's anachronistic sociopolitical society as soon as possible for reasons of ideological purity but rather by incorporating Tibet and Tibetans into the fabric of the PRC in an optimum fashion by allowing them time to come to accept the value of reforms and change. If Beijing could achieve this, Tibet's position as an integral part of China would be permanently secure. While this in retrospect seems overly optimistic, Mao was willing to pursue this because he knew if his gradualist policy ultimately failed and a revolt occurred, he could shift to his "last resort" policy and use the PLA to put down the Tibetans and implement reforms forcibly.

Consequently, when the Dalai Lama arrived in Lhasa at the start of April 1957, he found a much more positive situation than had existed when he had left for India four months earlier.

That should have meant smooth sailing for a reset to cordial and cooperative Sino-Tibetan relations. However, as will be examined in the following chapters, it did not.

---

[115] Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui, entry for 22 April 1956.

[116] DPRC. "Transcript of the meeting in the Secretariat of the Central Committee held on 6 March 1957" (emphasis added).

3

Khamba Developments in Lhasa and Saipan

The Dalai Lama arrived back in Lhasa on 1 April 1957, into what was a relatively calm city. However, beneath the surface, challenges to Sino-Tibetan cooperative relations were emerging. One of these was the creation of a Khamba resistance organization in Lhasa.

THE FORMATION OF CHUSHIGANDRU

Gombo Tashi's decision to send a group of young Khambas to Kalimpong in late 1956 had worked out exceptionally well. Not only had six of them been selected by the CIA for paramilitary training, but an important connection was made with Gyalo Thondup, the Dalai Lama's brother who was the liaison person for the CIA in India. This was an exciting time, because the selection of these six for exfiltration was seen as just the start of American support for the Khamba rebellion. All of this led Gombo Tashi to decide it was time to try to do something new—to unite the many Khambas who had fled to Lhasa into a new and unified militant organization that would be able to fight the Chinese more effectively than had been the case in Sichuan.

Gombo Tashi was convinced that one of the major deficiencies of the rebellion in Sichuan was its lack of internal organization and unity. The rebellion actually was a series of disconnected revolts that occurred at different times in the different local Khamba regions. These revolts eventually spread to most of Sichuan's Khamba regions, but there was no coordination between them, and each region basically fought the Chinese independently of the others.

However, creating a unified insurgent organization would not be an easy task, since Kham traditionally was neither culturally homogenous nor a unified political entity. There were about twenty-five or thirty distinctive political units that the British referred to as "native states," for example, Litang, Batang, Derge, and Nyarong. These were traditionally headed by a chief or a king or a lama/monastery, and their primary loyalty was to their own locality and leaders, not to Kham as a whole. There was, therefore, no tradition of cooperation between all these Khamba native states, and in many cases there was instead a long history of competition and warfare. One of the leading kalöns, Surkhang, once commented on the strength of the Khamba's local regional identity, saying "If you look at it [Kham], it looks like the Khambas are the same, but some places were all Gelugpa and some places were all Sakya, or all Nyingma or were Kagyüpa. And internally, they fought each other a lot. For example, Chamdo and Traya were like the Arabs and Israelis.[1]

Gombo Tashi, as a Litangpa, of course, understood this historical reality, but he felt that the current situation in Sichuan was so dire that it would be possible to overcome those local loyalties and unify them to confront a hated common enemy, so he set out to create a Khamba organization in Lhasa that would integrate all the Khambas under a single command hierarchy. Litang Athar recalled Gombo Tashi's thinking about this,

> [We Khambas had fought in Sichuan from 1956.] But we were not able to fight as one unit. For example, all of us were not able to gather around one chief and fight as an organization. What was special and different [about Gombo Tashi's plan] . . . was that all the various traders from Kham's thirty-three groups ["native states"], were able to come together and fight. So this was a united fight. This was something that was different. . . . Previously, we just spent time fighting in our homeland, but we were not able to unite. . . . Now all the traders at Lhasa joined, and then they fought united.[2]

Gombo Tashi first started to organize the Khambas from his own homeland of Litang and the three areas of Batang, Gyeltang, and Chantreng that were historically linked as Baligyesum.[3] Then he branched out to meet Khamba leaders from the other areas such as Derge and Nyarong. However, holding meetings to discuss a new insurgency organization was not straightforward nor risk-free, because on the one hand the Dalai Lama had banned the Second "People's" Association led by Alo Chöndze (and any other subsequent ad hoc meetings of the "people").[4] And on the other hand, the Chinese were worried about the growing influx of armed and angry Sichuan Khambas into Lhasa, so they were keeping a close eye on these Eastern Tibetans and had been trying to persuade the Kashag to deal with the threat they represented. Gombo Tashi, therefore, needed some plausible story to explain why he was having meetings with other Khamba leaders, so he followed the example of Alo Chöndze's People's Association and resorted to organizing several religious rites as a pretext for the political meetings. For example, they sponsored a "Long Life" ritual for the Dalai Lama [Tib. denshu]. Doing religious activities on behalf of the Dalai Lama was especially popular, because he had just returned to Lhasa from India. This soon developed into a plan for the Dalai Lama to give a major Kalachakra teaching, and that led to the plan to have all Tibetans donate funds, gold and jewels to build a golden throne for the Dalai Lama.

---

[1] Surkhang, interview, USA, 1967, H.0235.07.

[2] Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.04.

[3] In Tibetan: ba ('ba' thang), li (li thang), gye (rgyal thang), sum (gsum). Chantreng had been part of Litang in the past.

[4] See Goldstein 2014, 41–74, for a discussion of Alo Chöndze's new People's Association.

A famous Chushigandru commander, Radru Ngawang, explained how this evolved:

> At first, when we discussed it [creating an insurgent organization] there were [Khambas from] Baligyesum since from ancient times these [three areas] were sort of one unit [in southern Kham]. They first discussed offering a large Long Life Prayer Ritual and when the discussion about this took place it was said that all the Khamba traders should do it together and that the Amdowas should be included. We were discussing this at Gombo Tashi's house. . . . So all the traders united in doing this . . . . Then it was said that we need to write a petition asking His Holiness to perform a Kalachakra initiation and the Lamrim Chenmo rite.[5] And when this petition was being written, people said that we needed to give the Dalai Lama a fine offering; one that never existed before in Tibet. When one wrote a request for doing such rituals, it was customary to put in the heading, "shabbey sertri ngöntö drungdu" which means, 'To your lotus feet and the extreme high golden throne," so it was from this that the idea arose to give the Dalai Lama a gold throne as there were no purely golden thrones anywhere in Tibet. So we said that one should now be made [as an offering to the Dalai Lama]. So that is how the idea of a golden throne began. . . . However, we just couldn't begin making the throne [for the Dalai Lama] like that. We had to get permission from the Chinese, and in order to do that, we had to make connections with them. This was done for us by Baba Phüntso Wangyal, Baba Gen Yeshi and others. . . . So permission was received from everybody and work on the throne began in the courtyard (Tib. kyamra) of the Jokhang Temple. There were a lot of contributions from Tibetans from all over. Even the Chinese sent eighteen trucks free of charge to transport all the donations of tsamba, rice, and flour from Shigatse to Lhasa.[6]

The official Chushigandru history reports similarly, "From the beginning to the end we gathered in the parks pretending to play mahjong. Sometimes we put out all the documents for making the golden throne and an abacus and pretended to be working on the accounts. We made our servants carry pistols and stand on guard at some distance."[7]

---

[5] This was cosponsored by the Khamba traders (Chushigandru) and by the Amdowa Jimpa Gyatso, who had also made a similar request to the Dalai Lama to do the teaching. (Welfare Society of Central Dhokham Chushi Gangdrug 1998, 2); Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.03.

[6] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.09. The exile Chushigandru organization in India says permission [for the throne] was asked from the Dalai Lama in the second Tibetan month [April 1957], and work started on the throne in the third month [May] (Chu sgang lo rgyus rtsom sgrig tshogs chung 2000, 51).

Actually, the first overt step toward creating a Khamba organization was a large public demonstration carried out by the Khambas from Baligyesum at the start of 1957. They talked anong themselves and decided to do something public to make the citizens of Lhasa and the Chinese take notice, so they organized a huge procession of about seven hundred riders, all of whom were dressed in Khamba-style clothing and were carrying their guns and swords. Although they were not going to carry political signs or explicitly shout anything opposing the Chinese, they knew that this would be seen by Tibetans in Lhasa as a show of their unity and force.

They chose the third day of the New Year's celebration period (4 March 1957) for this procession, since this was the time when people in Lhasa traditionally burned incense everywhere to propitiate the gods [Tib. lhapsö]. One Litangba who participated in that demonstration recalled,

> On the third of the first Tibetan month . . . we went to demonstrate. This was the beginning [of the Chushigandru organization]. It was said that all the people from Baligyesum [in Lhasa] gathered together and altogether there were probably about seven hundred riders. Many of us had a rifle and a pistol, and [for those who didn't] we went to borrow guns from aristocratic households, so there wasn't anybody who didn't have a gun.
>
> We gathered in the courtyard of Andrutsang [Gombo Tashi] and from there rode in line around the Barkor [main market] Street, and then we went to the place [in the southeast part of Lhasa] where people used to celebrate the birthday of the Dalai Lama (Tib. trungla yarsö). We burned incense as people normally did . . . while yelling, "May the gods be victorious." However, we also shot a lot of guns [in the air]. The Chinese were kind of strange. When we shot several thousands of rounds in the air, they did not pay any attention to it.
>
> Q. Didn't they say anything?
>
> A. They didn't. I had been wondering what would happen, and some people had set up some sentries and made some preparations [for trouble]. [But none came and] after that, we rode back through the Barkor Street to the courtyard of Gombo Tashi where there were a lot of people serving us beer and food while we were still carrying our rifles on our backs. Then we drank beer and danced.
>
> The next day, I heard that a Chinese official sent his interpreter, who was a Litangba, to us and he told us, "You shouldn't do things like this. That was too much and it was very dangerous." The interpreter was pretending that he had come to say

---

7. Chu sgang lo rgyus rtsom sgrig tshogs chung 2000, 69. It is important to note that at this time this was a purely Khamba organization, despite JKTS sending Andrutsang (Gombo Tashi) a letter at the end of October 1956 telling him that "the Kham and Böd [Tibet] mimang should unite." (Shakabpa diary, entry for 30 October 1956).

> this internally [unofficially], although he actually had been sent by the Chinese. . . . After that, the situation was calm and we made the preparations [for starting Chushigandru].[8]

As Gombo Tashi was organizing his fellow Khambas from other regions, the question of what to call the new organization arose. They wanted a name that would convey that this new organization encompassed all of the Khamba regions, and when no single name seemed to win favor, six prominent Khambas led by Gombo Tashi went to consult with Trijang Rinpoche, the Dalai Lama's junior tutor, who himself was a Khamba from Chantreng.[9] Trijang Rinpoche suggested the name "Chushigandru," which means "four rivers and six mountain ranges." He said it had been used historically to delimit all of Eastern Tibet including Amdo and Kham. Tri Ralpchen (the ancient King of Tibet who ruled from 815–838 A.D.), he said, had sent troops to Kham and then conscripted soldiers from the area which was called in the texts "Chushigandru," that is, the area that encompassed all of Eastern Tibet.[10] When Trijang Rinpoche did a divination about the appropriateness of this name, the result said that the name was good, but he told Gombo Tashi and the others that they should check this by consulting with other lamas.[11] They did, and their divinations confirmed the appropriateness of Chushigandru. However, before accepting this, Gombo Tashi also consulted Shungden.[12]

Radru Ngawang explained:

> We requested that the medium for our root protector deity Shungden go into trance and summon Shungden so we could ask his advice about this [name]. Shungden proclaimed that Chushigandru was a good name, and so that's how we decided to use it. This name, however, referred only to the Khamba and Amdo traders . . . the mimang [people of Tibet] were not associated with this. . . . So this is how [the name] Chushigandru came to be. The mimang (Tibetan people) had nothing to do with it. Since I was one of those who was involved at that time, this is the truth! . . . There was no talk at that time of the People's Association [of Tibetans from all regions].[13]

After many meetings, an official oath-taking ceremony occurred in the temple room in Gombo Tashi's house. There, the members took an oath in front of the Protector Deity Palden Lhamo, pledging to devote their time and wealth to prepare to fight the Chinese by buying guns and horses and ammunition, and so forth—and to keep all of this completely secret.[14] According to Chinese sources, this ceremony took place on 20 May.[15]

---

[8] Dündül, interview, India, 1994, H.0058.01.

[9] The six were Andrutsang Gombo Tashi, the Phara jiso, Gyeltang Kharchen Chandzö, the trader Tsarong Lodrö, Traya Lama Atru, and Radru Ngawang (Mda' zur Li thang dbra phrug ngag dbang [Radru Ngawang] 2008, 168).

[10] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.03.

[11] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.09.

[12] Mda' zur Li thang dbra phrug ngag dbang (Radru Ngawang) 2008, 1:168.

[13] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.09.

Consequently, less than two months after the Dalai Lama arrived in Lhasa, a Khamba insurgency organization had started in Lhasa. The Chinese mentioned this in the 20 May entry of the CCP's Tibet chronicle, writing, "Rebel elements that entered Tibet have established a reactionary organization called 'Chushigandru' in Lhasa that was headed by Andru Gombo Tashi who was the head of the rebellious elements in the Sichuan-Tibet area. The 'Chushigandru' reactionary organization . . . included Tibetans from Gansu, Qinghai, Yunnan, and Sichuan."[16] Actually, both the Kashag and Beijing recognized that these armed Khambas represented a potential threat to peace and calm in Tibet, and they discussed options to deal with them. It is not clear what topics were suggested, but one important idea the Chinese and Kalön Ngabö pushed was to disarm them. However, Beijing considered the Khambas part of Tibet's internal "policing," in other words, as falling under the responsibility of the Tibetan government, so they would only urge the Kashag to take action, but would not act themselves. The Kashag ministers had no internal consensus on this, so nothing was done by either side.[17]

This creation of Chushigandru did not escape the notice of the Kashag because of a connection with the Tibetan army. The kalöns knew that Gombo Tashi had close relations with Phala, Namseling, and JKTS in India, as well as with Tashi Bera, who was one of the two commanders of the Trapchi Regiment and a core member of Phala's anti-China clique. The Kashag, in fact, was worried that elements in the Tibetan army might try to assist Chushigandru, since several Tibetan military officers had been unofficially attending the Khambas' clandestine organizational meetings. The Kashag, therefore, took steps to prevent this from escalating, but it did so by taking action not against the Khambas, but rather against the Tibetan army's represenatives. Sambo, the co-commander of the Trapchi Regiment, recalled: "In 1957, during the Tsongjö Prayer Festival in the second Tibetan month [18 to 29 April 1957], the Kashag summoned the military officers and told us that the Khambas are meeting at Gombo Tashi's house and instructed us that under no circumstances should we join, interfere, or have anything to do with them [Chushigandru]. This applied to both the officers and the common soldiers."[18] Despite this, a few officers continued to attend the Chushigandru "meetings" secretly as unofficial representatives of the Tibetan army.

---

[14] Athar, interview, India, 1991, H.0007.02.

[15] Zhonggong xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui, ed. 1990, entry for 20 May 1957. (page 72).

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ngabö, interview, Beijing, 1995, H.0040.04.

[18] Sambo, interview, India, 1981, H.0205.25.

The successful formation of this Khamba insurgency organization in Lhasa represented a major failure for Mao. By now he had hoped his moderate policies would create better cooperation with the Dalai Lama and his government and thereby motivate them to take the lead and marginalize the anti-Chinese and separatist factions in Tibet, but it had not. Neither the Dalai Lama nor the Kashag were willing to take any concrete action to curb the Khambas in Lhasa. The Khambas were armed and tough and would likely fight rather than give up their guns. Since they were not causing any problems in Lhasa at that time, they decided it was more risky to try to disarm them than to leave them alone.

At the same time as this was developing in Lhasa, ST CIRCUS, the CIA's covert Tibet project, took a major step forward when it exfiltrated six young Khambas from Kalimpong for training.

SAIPAN ISLAND

On 19 April 1957, the six young Khambas who had been chosen for training received a message from Gyalo Thondup through Gyadotsang, telling them they were to leave that very night.[19] They were told to put on an Indian dhoti (pajama-like, loose shirt-pants outfit) that had been bought for them in the market and to leave behind all identifying items such as money, watches, rings, and so forth. Litang Athar recalled:

> I don't know whether they chose [who should go] from our files and photos, but it was probably something like that. . . . I can't say if it was Gyalo Thondup's choice or the American's or whose choice it was. I don't know. Bur anyway, six names were chosen. So we went at night and didn't inform anyone, not even our mothers or relatives. . . . .
>
> Q. Initially you were twenty-seven young people [sent from Lhasa], so weren't the others disappointed?
>
> A. Yes, poor fellows. Of course they were very disappointed. We were disappointed too, since it would have been good if all of us could have gone together. But even though only six were chosen, Gyalo Thondup said that gradually the others would be sent and we believed that this would be done, so we left.

---

[19] That date comes from A thar Nor bu (Athar) 2004, 21. Frank Holober, the CIA officer in charge of the CIA Task Force from July 1957, also gave the departure date as April 1957 (Holober, interview, USA, 1993). Conboy and Morrison did not give a departure date but wrote that in February 1957, Hoskins [in Calcutta] was ordered by Washington to "immediately identify eight Tibetan candidates for external training" (2002, 39) and "with the Dalai Lama en route to Lhasa, attention shifted in early March to smuggling the six Khampas out of India" (2002, 41). Another Chushigandru leader gave the exfiltration date a month later on the twentieth of the third Tibetan month, which was May 1957, but he was clearly mistaken (Mda' zur Li thang dbra phrug ngag dbang [Radru Ngawang] 2008, 200). Knaus (1999, 138) gave a departure date of December 1956, which would have been before the Dalai Lama left for Lhasa, so that is also certainly wrong.

> We were told to wait at Kalimpong's "ninth mile" at Tibet House [which was about 1½ miles before the main town]. Gyalo Thondup came there at 8 P.M. in a black vehicle [jeep] and took us straight to Siliguri and into a tea garden. Gyalo's Amdo cook named Gelong was with him. When the motor road ended, we left the car . . . and then Gyalo gave Gelong directions and told him he was placing us entirely in his hands. He also told him to make sure that none of us got lost. After Gyalo left, we continued on with Gelong, who was looking at something that we later learned was a compass. Eventually we came to a large river called the Tashidrag [Teesta] that separated India and [East] Pakistan.
>
> Crossing the river was difficult, because in certain places it was quite deep, so we walked up and down [the bank looking for a good spot to cross]. Once, Gelong had a difficult moment in the river when he went ahead trying to cross, but we were holding hands and were able to hold on to him. . . .
>
> On the other side of the river, there was a motorable road that Gyalo Thondup had told Gelong to go south on, so after we crossed the river, we continued ahead for awhile until Gelong . . . told us to sit down and take a rest in the forest beside the road. It was a moonlit night, and from our resting place we suddenly saw some soldiers coming our way. They looked to us like Indian soldiers. The Pakistani soldiers looked exactly like the Indians in their dress and they were carrying English 305 carbines, so we said that we must still be in India, not Pakistan.[20] Then Gelong signaled them with his flashlight, and when the soldiers flashed back, he told us that the soldiers were our companions, so we went and were met by Taktse Rinpoche's servant Thöndrup, [also known as Gyentsen] who greeted us with "Tashi Delek." He was with two Pakistani soldiers. Gyalo's cook [Gelong] then returned to Kalimpong. He had been okay to guide us to East Pakistan since he spoke Hindi, but once the Americans came onto the scene, they needed someone who knew English to accompany us.[21]

The plan was that Taktse Rinpoche was going to join the Khamba trainees in Okinawa as the main translator, but like his brother Gyalo Thondup, he was too important to risk meeting the Khambas in person in East Pakistan, so he suggested that the Americans bring his trusted servant there. The servant, who spoke some English, was living in Taktse's apartment in New Jersey, so the CIA had to covertly move him all the way to Dacca (present-day Dhaka) and then via helicopter to the Siliguri area.[22] Athar said that after this, they continued and finally arrived at a small outpost.

---

[20] 20. The Khambas called the Lee-Enfield carbine they used a model 305, but I could only find a record of a Lee-Enfield 303. So while I will use 305 in this book, keep in mind that it was really the Lee-Enfield 303.

[21] 21. Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.01.

[22] 22. John Reagan, who was overseeing the exfiltration, recalled that Gyentsen left New Jersey so secretly that after a while his host family got worried that he was missing and contacted the FBI, who started an investigation (Reagan, interview, USA, 1993).

> When we went inside, there was a bald American who was asleep. He was there to receive us and it felt reassuring to meet him. . . .[23] Then they took us on a first-class train [surrounded by Pakistani soldiers]. . . . The local people probably thought that we were prisoners, so they came to look at us, but the Pakistani soldiers were very strict and drove them away.[24] We travelled in the train for more than a day and night and then we arrived at an airport. At that time, we didn't know where we were, but now I guess it was Dacca or Chittagong, but who knows? [laughs].

The six Khambas also had no idea where they were going, and even when they were interviewed in the 1990s, still thought they had been trained on Guam, not Saipan. Athar explained what happened next:

> We were put in a house near the airport where they served us good food from tins. . . . Then we flew off, and after a short time, landed.[25] I guess that we stopped at Bangkok to refuel. Then we flew off again . . . I think we went to Okinawa. . . . Taktse Rinpoche was already there. We all first underwent physical check-ups at the army headquarters and were told that we were physically okay for training. Then after a few days, we took another plane ride to some island [Saipan Island in the Marianas]. . . . We were taken to the corner of that jagged island, which seemed to be a place where the Americans had fought the Japanese. This was where our main training took place. The island had an airport and a helicopter landing place, and underneath the airport there was a room where we had our training in maps, guerrilla activities, wireless communication, et cetera. The teachers were all Americans. Taktse Rinpoche and his servant were there, but Taktse Rinpoche was the main teacher [translator] since Gyentsen didn't know the language well. . . . We trained there hard for about six months.[26]

The main emphasis of the Khamba's training was sending and receiving coded communications. Athar's description of their normal timetable of activities illustrates this:

> For six months we got up at 5:30 A.M. and did exercises until 6. Then we ate breakfast from 6 to 7. From 7:30 to 11:30 we studied telegraphy and then from 11:30 to 12:30 we ate lunch. From 12:30 to 1:30 we studied telegraphy and from 1:30 to 3:00 we studied

---

[23] Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.01. The CIA agent was Edward McAllister. He was a Karachi-based case officer (Conboy and Morrison 2002, 42).

[24] The CIA had given them each a set of white clothing to change into and had them accompanied by armed soldiers in front and behind so they looked like they were prisoners being escorted somewhere (Lotse 2001, 6).

[25] The six of them plus Gyentsen and John Reagan were taken on a C-118 plane from the U.S. Air Force's 322nd Squadron, which was based at the Kadena Air Base on Okinawa. The plane's windows were blackened and the crew did not know who they were taking. For more details on the flight operation see Conboy and Morrison 1993, 44–45.

[26] Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.01. Taktse Rimpoche (interview, USA, 1996) said that people were told that the Tibetans were from the Philippines.

> covert methods. Then from 3:00 to 4:30 we went outside to study map reading and from 4:30 on we did self-study and rest. This was the schedule for five days in a week. In the evening, we saw study films on spying. Saturday was a special day as we practiced listening to wireless messages [decoding] from 5:30 to 11:30 A.M. and then, after lunch, we were taken outside to do shooting until 5 P.M. We were taught to use about twelve different kinds of pistols and rifles, as well as several kinds of large and small machine guns, and sometimes also Russian and Chinese rifles. . . . And we studied how to establish secret organizations and how to set up secret airdrops.[27]

All of the Khambas were already experienced in how to fire rifles and pistols, so weapons practice was no problem for them. On the other hand, learning to use the wireless communication equipment was a different story, since they had to encrypt and de-encrypt messages. This turned out to be a major hurdle.

The CIA trained them on the RS 1 crystal-operated radio transmitter and receiver that was designed as a spy radio and was modular so that the receiver, transmitter, and crank-operated power supply could be separately handled and hidden as smaller packages.[28] The set was heavy and difficult to operate and carry, as Athar described:

> A. [The units] were big. . . . The sending unit was about a foot long and the receiver was this much long. I think it was like 4' × 6' or more. Then there was a generator that had been used in the Second World War. We had to crank a handle to run it [the generator].
>
> Q. So you needed two people, right?
>
> A. Even if you had two people, you still couldn't send [messages]. For example, if I was sending a message, the other person would get tired turning the crank on the generator so we [later] called my partner's younger brother [from Lhasa] to crank the generator. We actually needed three people. We had a solar battery, but it didn't work well and broke, so we just threw it away. The equipment we used . . . could send wireless messages all over the world. . . . The sending unit and the receiver could be carried by one person (they were about 20 pounds), and the generator by another person, but the generator was very heavy and one man could barely carry it on his back. Then we also had to carry guns and our food. . . .
>
> Q. Did you need the generator when you received a message?
>
> A. Yes, we needed it for everything.
>
> Q. How did you know when they were going to send you a message?
>
> A. For receiving messages, there were exact times during each day and exact frequencies. The U.S. kept frequencies open so it was easy to send. You had to set up the frequencies on your radio. I would look at the timetable.
>
> Q. Normally, would you send the wireless messages during the day or at night?

---

[27] A thar Nor bu (Athar) 2004, 24–25.

[28] McCarthy 1997, 240. For more about the radio, see http://www.militaryradio.com/spyradio/rs1.html, accessed 11 March 2019.

> A. They were sent in daytime as well as at night. I could also tell them a specific time, for example, I am going to send you something at this time. It depended on me, because in Tibet things were dangerous and difficult. Over here [in America] they could leave the radio open all twenty-four hours, but we had to carry the load [equipment] to a place where there were no people and then send the wireless message. Then we hid the equipment somewhere.
>
> Q. Since this was all secret, how did you carry the equipment?
>
> A. We carried it in the traditional Tibetan wooden [frame] rucksacks that Tibetan pilgrims use to carry loads on their backs.[29]

Athar and Lotse were given two complete wireless sets, but this equipment was so bulky and heavy that they could not carry both on their backs with the generators, so their plan was to quickly bury one unit and then try to buy a horse or donkey to carry the other. However, this was the not the least of their problems. Far more imposing and problematic was learning how to encrypt, decrypt, and transmit messages.

Tibetan officials, surprisingly, had been using encryption for telegraph communications between India and Lhasa since at least 1949. Their encryption system utilized codebooks that were mini dictionaries containing Tibetan syllables in alphabetical order. Figure 2 is the first page of a 1949 codebook.[30] It had a total of sixty-three pages, each page containing one hundred Tibetan syllables that were laid out in rows and columns ten by ten, so the codebook contained 6,300 entries in written Tibetan. Beneath each entry (syllable), was a unique four-digit number starting from one. Thus, the number under the first Tibetan syllable was 0001 and each subsequent syllable continued in numerical order, up to 6,300.

The numbers associated with the Tibetan syllable were used to compose the message. For example, if one wanted to send a message consisting of the first five syllables in the codebook in figure 2, the message that would have been sent was: 0001, 0002, 0003, 0004, 0005. On the other end, the recipient of the message would look up these numbers in their copy of the codebook to find the associated Tibetan syllables and translate these into English. The codebook used by the CIA in the Tibetan program has not been released, but it appears to have been a version of the 1949 codebook with encryption enhanced by transforming the four-digit numbers before sending.[31]

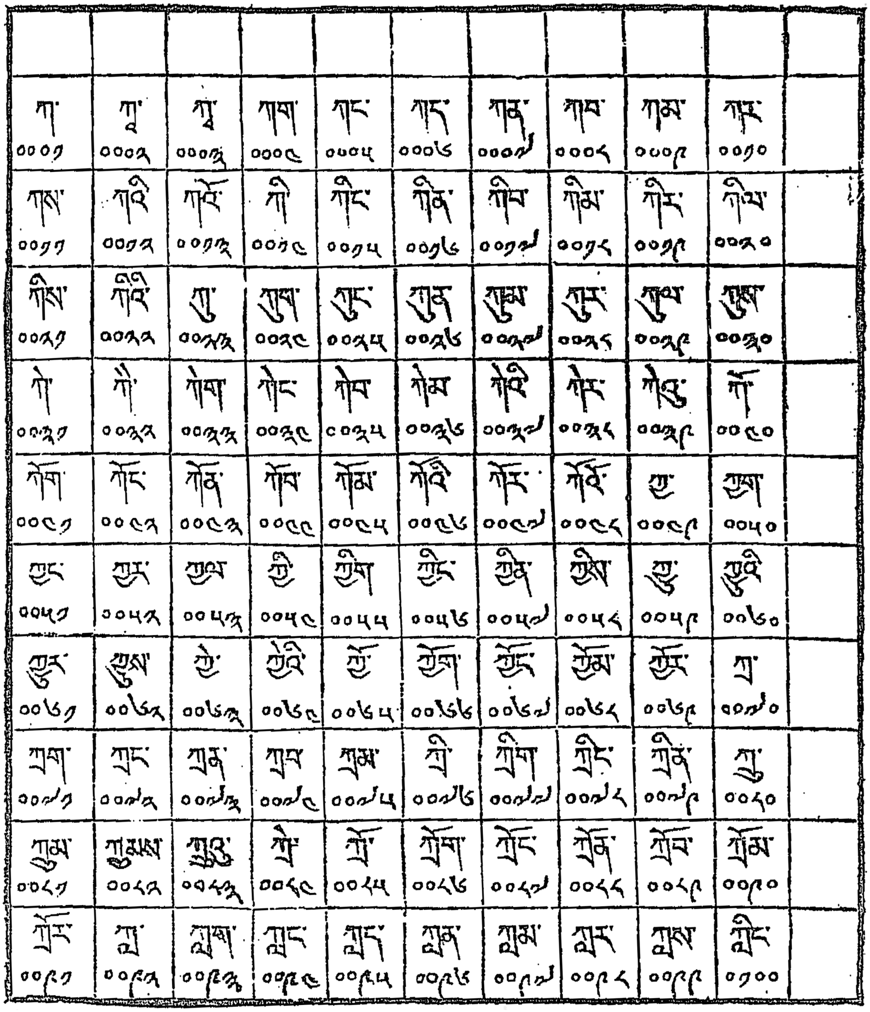
Encrypting messages, however, was very difficult for the Khambas to master because of the nature of the Tibetan language and because they were not well-educated. Athar, who became the best in communications, had been a monk and

---

[29] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.01.

[30] Rlung 'phrin gtong deb shes bya kun khyab dge. Codebook [Xylograph ms.] 1949.

[31] Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.03. Frank Holober confirmed this in an interview: "Communications were by words in a Tibetan-English dictionary, each having numbers" (interview, USA, 1995).



ཀ་ ༠༠༠༡	ཀཱ་ ༠༠༠༢	ཀྭ་ ༠༠༠༣	ཀག ༠༠༠༤	ཀང་ ༠༠༠༥	ཀད་ ༠༠༠༦	ཀན་ ༠༠༠༧	ཀབ་ ༠༠༠༨	ཀམ་ ༠༠༠༩	ཀར་ ༠༠༡༠	
ཀས་ ༠༠༡༡	ཀའི ༠༠༡༢	ཀའོ་ ༠༠༡༣	ཀི ༠༠༡༤	ཀིང་ ༠༠༡༥	ཀིན་ ༠༠༡༦	ཀིབ ༠༠༡༧	ཀིམ་ ༠༠༡༨	ཀིར་ ༠༠༡༩	ཀིལ་ ༠༠༢༠	
ཀིས་ ༠༠༢༡	ཀིའི ༠༠༢༢	ཀུ་ ༠༠༢༣	ཀུག་ ༠༠༢༤	ཀུང་ ༠༠༢༥	ཀུན ༠༠༢༦	ཀུམ ༠༠༢༧	ཀུར་ ༠༠༢༨	ཀུལ ༠༠༢༩	ཀུས ༠༠༣༠	
ཀེ་ ༠༠༣༡	ཀཻ་ ༠༠༣༢	ཀེག ༠༠༣༣	ཀེང ༠༠༣༤	ཀེབ ༠༠༣༥	ཀེམ ༠༠༣༦	ཀེའི ༠༠༣༧	ཀེར་ ༠༠༣༨	ཀེའུ་ ༠༠༣༩	ཀོ་ ༠༠༤༠	
ཀོག ༠༠༤༡	ཀོང་ ༠༠༤༢	ཀོན་ ༠༠༤༣	ཀོབ་ ༠༠༤༤	ཀོམ་ ༠༠༤༥	ཀོའི ༠༠༤༦	ཀོར་ ༠༠༤༧	ཀོད་ ༠༠༤༨	ཀྱ་ ༠༠༤༩	ཀྱག ༠༠༥༠	
ཀྱང་ ༠༠༥༡	ཀྱར་ ༠༠༥༢	ཀྱལ ༠༠༥༣	ཀྱི ༠༠༥༤	ཀྱིག ༠༠༥༥	ཀྱིང་ ༠༠༥༦	ཀྱིན་ ༠༠༥༧	ཀྱིས ༠༠༥༨	ཀྱུ་ ༠༠༥༩	ཀྱུའི ༠༠༦༠	
ཀྱུར་ ༠༠༦༡	ཀྱུས་ ༠༠༦༢	ཀྱེ་ ༠༠༦༣	ཀྱེའི ༠༠༦༤	ཀྱོ་ ༠༠༦༥	ཀྱོག་ ༠༠༦༦	ཀྱོང ༠༠༦༧	ཀྱོམ་ ༠༠༦༨	ཀྱོར་ ༠༠༦༩	ཀྲ་ ༠༠༧༠	
ཀྲག ༠༠༧༡	ཀྲང་ ༠༠༧༢	ཀྲན་ ༠༠༧༣	ཀྲབ ༠༠༧༤	ཀྲམ་ ༠༠༧༥	ཀྲི་ ༠༠༧༦	ཀྲིག ༠༠༧༧	ཀྲིད་ ༠༠༧༨	ཀྲིན་ ༠༠༧༩	ཀྲུ་ ༠༠༨༠	
ཀྲུམ་ ༠༠༨༡	ཀྲུམས་ ༠༠༨༢	ཀྲུའུ་ ༠༠༨༣	ཀྲེ ༠༠༨༤	ཀྲོ་ ༠༠༨༥	ཀྲོག ༠༠༨༦	ཀྲོང ༠༠༨༧	ཀྲོན་ ༠༠༨༨	ཀྲོབ་ ༠༠༨༩	ཀྲོམ་ ༠༠༩༠	
ཀྲོར་ ༠༠༩༡	ཀླ་ ༠༠༩༢	ཀླག་ ༠༠༩༣	ཀླང ༠༠༩༤	ཀླད་ ༠༠༩༥	ཀླན་ ༠༠༩༦	ཀླམ་ ༠༠༩༧	ཀླར ༠༠༩༨	ཀླས ༠༠༩༩	ཀླིང ༠༡༠༠	

FIGURE 2. Page 1 of Rlung 'phrin gtong deb shes bya kun khyab dge ("Book to send telegraphs"), xylograph, 1949.

could read Tibetan, but not at a high level, because he didn't study much as a young monk.

An Introduction to the Tibetan Writing System

The Tibetan language has an alphabet with thirty letters and is syllabic, in that virtually every syllable has meaning. Each syllable consists of a root letter around which there may be up to six other letters that are prefixed, subjoined, suffixed, adjoined (on top of the root), and post-suffixed. The problem for using this to code messages is that these other “non-root” letters are not pronounced sequentially. For example, the verb that is pronounced *drub* (“acquire” or “obtain”) contains letters in all six of the possible slots and is actually spelled *bsgrubs* [བསྒྲུབས]. In this word, the letter *g* is the root letter and the letter *b* is a prefixed letter, while the first *s* is an adjoined letter and the letter *r* is a subjoined letter. The letter *u* is a subjoined vowel and *b* is a suffixed letter, while *s* is a post-suffixed letter. Consequently, because the spoken pronunciation of Tibetan words is very different from the written form, to be able to use the coding dictionary, the Khambas had to know (1) that the spoken term *drub* was spelled *bsgrubs* and (2) that it would be found in the codebook (dictionary) under the letter *g* not *d*.

To learn how to spell Tibetan words, one must know the rules concerning which letters can be suffixed or prefixed. These rules were described in an indigenous Tibetan grammar called *Sumjupa legshe jonpe wangpo*, which specified:

i. There are ten letters that can be used as suffixes (Tib. tsenju): ga, nga, da, na, ba, ma, ‘a, ra, la, sa.
ii. There are five letters that can be used as prefixes (Tib. ngönju): ga, da, ba, ma, ‘a.
iii. There are three letters that can be used as affixes or top letters (Tib. tsepa [or] gojen): ra, la, sa.
iv. There are four letters that can be used as subjoined letters (Tib. meyog [or] dogjen): ya, ra, la, wa.
v. There are four written vowels [Tib. dbyangs]: i, u, e, o. If there is no written vowel, the vowel “a” is assumed.

All educated Tibetans learned these rules, since it was impossible to spell out a word verbally without knowing this. When educated Tibetans learned this system, they did not use dictionaries comparable to those found in the West, since the earliest Tibetan “dictionaries” were really spelling aids with neither definitions nor an organized system of internal alphabetization. They were written with the intent that the user would memorize the entire volume rather than use it as a reference book. For example, the famous sixteenth-century Tibetan dictionary titled *Tagyig ngagdrim gi dzawa,* which was compiled by Began Lotsawa, contained separate sections for each of the thirty letters in the Tibetan alphabet, but it did not contain any internal alphabetization based on prefixed, affixed, subjoined, and final letters.

By the eighteenth century, alphabetization had become more sophisticated, and lexical items were grouped within each of the thirty root letters according to the system of prefixes, affixes, and suffixes. For example, all the words starting with *kh* appeared before all the *khy* words, which came before all the *khr* words. However;

there was still no ordering within these subsections; that is, within all the words starting with *khy*, syllables like *khyi* and *khyu* did not follow any order.

The first Western-style dictionary of Tibetan, which appeared in 1834, was compiled by the great Hungarian Oriental scholar Alexander Csoma de Körös. It utilized the Tibetan teaching system for prefixed and affixed letters that was contained in the above-mentioned *Sumjupa* grammar as the basis for alphabetization. Csoma de Körös started each dictionary entry with the root letter alone and then the root letter with vowels in the "sumjupa" order of i, u, e, o. Then syllables consisting of a root letter and a suffixed letter were listed in accordance with the order given in Sumjupa. In other words, for the Tibetan root letter *g*, all those syllables with the suffixed letter *g* (e.g., gag) were listed before those with the suffixed letter *ng* (e.g., gang), before those with *d* (e..g., gad) and then *n* (e.g., gan), *m* (e..g., gam), and so forth. Similarly, the syllables with the vowel *i* came before *u*, and so on.

The first indigenous Tibetan dictionary to use a modern system of alphabetization was completed only in 1946 by a Tibetan monk scholar, Geshe Chödrag (Tib. dge bshes chos grags). It was first printed from carved wood blocks in 1949 and then published in Western book format with Chinese glosses in 1957.[32]

These six young Khamba traders, therefore, would not have previously used modern dictionaries, nor would they have studied Tibetan grammar rules and proper spellings, so finding the correct spelling (syllable) in the codebook for the word pronounced "drup" would have been very difficult. After a few months, therefore, the CIA realized that the trainees would not be able to learn to encrypt unless they received instruction in Tibetan spelling. Apparently, Taktse Rinpoche did not want to do that, or was himself not well versed in this aspect of Tibetan language, so they recruited Geshe Wangye, a learned Kalmyk monk who had studied in Drepung Monastery in Lhasa, and asked him to teach them grammar and spelling. Geshe Wangye was ethnically a Kalmyk Mongol so had been able to immigrate to America in 1955 to serve as a religious "priest" for a group of Kalmyk refugees ("from communism") whom the U.S. government had resettled in New Jersey. He worked there as the head of a small Kalmyk Buddhism temple (and was also a teacher of Mongolian and Tibetan language). The CIA had already been planning to use him in the United States to translate the coded messages they would receive from Tibet, so now they brought him to Saipan to teach the Khambas enough Tibetan grammar to enable them to code and decode messages.[33]

---

[32] This dictionary was titled *Brda dag ming tshig gsal ba bzhugs so*. This section is taken from Goldstein 1991.

[33] Conboy and Morrison 2002, 48, 52; A thar Nor bu (Athar) 2004, 26.

BLOWBACK

Teaching the Tibetans the skills needed to send encrypted wireless messages was essential to the success of the CIA's trial mission, but not the Khambas' own mission. These young Khambas had come to Kalimpong hoping to persuade Taiwan to take them for training in the use of modern military weapons, including antiaircraft weapons, since the Chinese were using planes to attack them in Sichuan, and then return them to their homeland in Kham together with supplies of weapons and ammunition so they could fight the Chinese. And while this, in retrospect, may seem naïve, at that moment they felt an urgency. The Khambas were losing the fighting in Litang and Batang (where they were from) and needed to reverse the battle situation right away. In fact, because of this urgency, the idea of going for foreign training was not considered favorably by all. Radru Ngawang, one of the Khamba insurgent's top commanders, said in an interview that in late 1956 when he told his own brother to go to India to get training, his brother refused. He said going for training abroad would take too long, so whatever he would learn it would be too late to help Litang, which by then would be lost. Instead, he went back to Litang to fight.[34]

Given this feeling of urgency, it is not surprising that the six Khamba trainees in Saipan were disappointed by their initial training. Not only were they spending an inordinate amount of time learning communications, but they were angry to find that the weapons they were given to train with were antiquated British Lee-Enfield rifles and old-model Sten and Bren guns. These were weapons they already had and knew how to use, so they were confused and frustrated as to why the Americans were not giving them better, more modern, weapons. The Khambas felt that they had been taken someplace far away for insurgency training by Americans, but were not being taught the kind of things that would allow them to return to Litang and fight the communists more effectively than before. The CIA, of course, was doing this as a trial, and were giving old weapons to ensure plausible deniability in case their weapons fell into Chinese hands after the Khambas were reinserted into Tibet/Kham.

Consequently, after about a month of training, the young Khambas discussed their frustration over this situation among themselves and jointly complained to their CIA trainers, telling them frankly that they wanted to be trained with better and more modern weapons. Lotse, one of the six, explained this in his autobiography:

> It had been little more than one month since we started our training when the six of us told our criticism (Tib. samjar) to the teachers. We said, "We don't think that the training we have obtained will enable us to challenge the Chinese. Furthermore, except for the wireless training, [nothing is new] because we have known from long

---

[34] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2003, H.0012.08.

> ago how to shoot all the other guns [that we have been given to use]. Previously, we were able to get [capture] guns and cannons from the Chinese, but we had to throw them away because we didn't know how to use them. Consquently, from now on, please give us training in the use of cannons and other types of modern equipment [Tib. thrüche sarbey rig].[35]

Lotse wrote that the teachers said that they would report this to their government, but that response did not satisfy one of the Khambas, Wangdü, who retorted angrily:

> When we came from India, Sawangchemmo [Gyalo Thondup] told us, "If you people go for training, one person will [later] be able to handle three thousand Chinese." Now, after arriving here, if we receive no training other than this, we think we won't be able to cope with the enemy any more than we were able to cope with them usually in the past. Therefore, from now on, I am not going to study [the nonmilitary subjects] any more. The teachers replied, "You are right. We do have training that would result in one person being able to challenge two thousand people, but we don't have the agreement [permission] to teach you that now and you also wouldn't be able to learn it. However, if you learn well the wireless communications that you are studying, and if you can send us back information on the situation through the wireless equipment, we will gradually be able to improve this situation.

Wangdü was not satisfied by this reponse and said,

> If this much is all that you can teach us now, then we are not going to study this because we know clearly that this training will not enable us to challenge the Chinese. [Wangdü then said to the other five Khambas] "It is up to you people [to decide] whether you are going to [continue to] study or not, but as for me, please send me back to India." The others [Khambas] expressed different opinions/criticisms, and then, finally, I, Lotse, said, "As for myself, I am going to learn whatever is taught. As the teachers have said, after reporting to Washington, I will accept whatever new training is given. This [training] is our main duty. The six of us were sent here for this training and Sawangchemmo [Gyalo Thondup] also has many wide-ranging plans. Moreover, I think that other Tibetans will be sent to get different training according to the situation. According to these factors, you, Wangdü, must stay and learn whatever is being taught." Wangdü didn't make any direct reply to this and only said, "I am not at all going to study [this]." When he said this, Chö Bulü [his servant, and one of the six], said that he will do whatever Wangdü does. The remaining four people—myself, Athar, Tsewang Dorje, and Tashi—however, agreed [that we should continue with the training]. Then the teachers left.[36]

It is assumed that the CIA trainers contacted Langley about this, but they have chosen not to write about this incident clearly, and the CIA has not released any

---

35. Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 8.
36. Ibid.

documents on the Saipan training project. However, Lotse says the CIA trainers decided that if Wangdü and Chö Bulü didn't want to continue their training, they didn't have to, but since they could not let them return to India for obvious security reasons, the CIA decided to detain them for the remainder of the training period. Lotse explained their detention,

> After about one hour passed, the head teacher drove up in a jeep and started to take Wangdü and Chö Bulü away from us. We four asked him to please stop doing this. We said, " We have all come together, so please let us stay together as a group." However, the teacher didn't listen, and Wangdü and Chö Bulü were taken away. At this time they told the four of us, "Don't worry about this. We will not treat them badly. If we send them [back to India] before you people leave, there will be some negative consequences, but sooner or later, we will bring them back"[37]

So according to Lotse, the CIA took Wangdü and Chö Bulü into "custody" and the other four did not see them again until some months later when the training on Saipan was finished.[38]

This account of a mini-revolt has been alternatively ignored, downplayed, or rejected by the CIA officers who worked with the Tibetans at this time. Conboy and Morrison's book on the CIA and Tibet, for example, mentioned this only in a single footnote that says: "There have been contemporary claims among the Tibetan ex-patriot community that Wangdu rebelled while on Saipan and, as a result, was placed in isolation by the CIA staff. Mustakos [one of the trainers] denies any such disciplinary problems: 'There were only three small buildings in our compound. We could not have isolated anybody if we wanted to; there was simply no room. (Mustakos, interview).'"[39] However, Mustakos was also quoted in Conboy and Morrison as commenting explicitly on the disagreement over the kind of weapons training they were being taught:

> "Their ideas on what weapons should be dropped were starting to get extravagant," remembers Mustakos. "Machine guns for each of their friends," they said, plus "artillery batteries would be nice." And, of the six Khambas, Wangdü—now known as "Walt"—led the cry for more sophisticated weaponry. . . . "He began complaining that he wanted to train with bigger guns, not waste time on radios."
>
> For the CIA, this posed a dilemma. Walt's demands for heavier, more modern, firepower conflicted with its need for skilled agents who would observe and report—not rush to the offensive.[40]

---

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Conboy and Morrison 1993, 269n17.

[40] Conboy and Morrison 1993, 53.

Another of the CIA trainers on Saipan, Roger McCarthy, wrote of this and the later training groups, saying, "There was never an incident of a trainee causing a serious problem of any kind at any point."[41] Of course, this may not have seemed a serious problem to him, since in the end those two were reunited with the other four and then flown together with them from Okinawa to East Pakistan. The evidence, however, supports the Tibetans' account. For example, a footnote in a recent book by Ken Knaus (another CIA official who worked with the Tibetans after 1959), states that "Slim" [Roger McCarthy] later argued with Wangdü during his debriefing in Darjeeling, India, after 1959. At this time, Wangdü criticized the CIA for not sending any weapons to the fighters in Kham, and Slim retorted, telling Wangdü that the reason was because Wangdü and his servant had refused to learn how to use wireless communications. Knaus, citing "Slim," wrote,

> Slim . . . reminded Walt [Wangdü] . . . that he had refused to take radio training and had also persuaded another member of the team to decline it. Therefore when the [their] team's only radio operator was killed, they lost the only means of providing information necessary to make the requested arms drop [in Litang]. Walt countered that if the drops had been made as soon as he had reported his presence with a force ready to use the arms without waiting for a detailed location of an appropriate site, he and his forces would have found and used them to repel the Chinese.[42]

Athar's autobiography and interviews aren't clear about this. He only mentions that Wangdü and Chö Bulü were unable to learn to code or decode messages so they could not send any messages, although he says that they did learn guerrilla warfare.[43] Athar, however, was also not satisfied with the training and the quality of weapons, but, like Lotse, was more accepting of the CIA's reasons for this.

> Of course, we can say they [the Americans] were using us, but they were helping us for some reason, right? In today's world, if a person had no food to eat and they say "poor thing" and give him relief [food], that's one thing. But politically, no one will help others without considering their own benefit. So thinking from this perspective, . . . we were at odds sometimes. . . . We were not satisfied with the American training. *We said we don't need to learn how to shoot these lousy guns; we knew how to shoot these before we came from Tibet.* . . . So If one looks from the vantage point of our wishes, we were not satisfied because when we told them that we needed something immediately [being supplied with high-quality modern arms and training in their use], they would say, "It must be done according to the situation." For example if our work [now] was not done precisely, then they [the CIA] could not [help with the other things later]. They were telling us that what they needed was information about what the Chinese were doing, where they were going, et cetera, . . . and if we did not

---

[41] McCarthy 1997, 245.

[42] Knaus 2012, 315. Knaus says the information came in an email from Slim dated 5 May 2004.

[43] A thar Nor bu (Athar) 2004, 26; Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.01.

> tell them that, then I don't think they would have helped us. . . . So unless they could examine what we [Tibetans] were going to do, they were not going to back us instantly. They needed to see what we were going to do.[44]

And much later in late 1958, when Wangdü met up with Athar and Lotse at Chushigandru headquarters in Lhoka and told the two of them that he wanted to go to India, they advised him not to argue again with the CIA when he met them in India.

> Athar and I called Wangdü and told him that we will give him as much Tibetan and Indian currency as he needs for his expenses, and then we advised him, "If you go to India, you must report in detail to the teachers and the leaders [of the CIA] all of the information. Furthermore, you should not feel regret [about what happened] *and should not argue about the matters that had happened earlier* and you must earnestly talk about the work that should be done in the future so that we will not make mistakes in our work. This is very important.[45]

Another indication that there was a serious dispute on Saipan is suggested by the fact that Gombo Tashi sent the trainees a letter from Lhasa through Gyalo Thondup around the time the conflict arose. It did not say much, telling them simply to keep focused on their goals and do their training well. However, it also mentioned that progress was being made in Lhasa—namely, a real Khamba insurgency organization called Chushigandru was being organized and other activities were being done such as a long-life ritual for the Dalai Lama, an invitation for the Dalai Lama to perform a Kalachakra Initiation teaching, and the building and offering of a golden throne to the Dalai Lama.[46] There is no mention of a date for this letter, but since Chushigandru was officially launched on 20 May 1957 and the golden throne was presented to the Dalai Lama in July 1957, the letter was probably written in June, roughly the time Lotse indicates that this incident occurred.

This letter, however, is culturally strange, because Tibetans traditionally did *not* send personal letters asking how things are going and telling the recriprient about what they were up to. It is unlikely, therefore, that Gombo Tashi would have sent these young Khambas a letter with no important underlying reason and no special content, so I suspect that his reason was to assuage the anger of the trainees. Gyalo Thondup. who was in India, was in close contact with the CIA, so would certainly have known of the problem, and was likely to have decided it would help to have their leader, Gombo Tashi, send them a letter telling them to study well. Gyalo Thondup, of course, also knew that the trial program had to succeed if Washington was going to continue to support his operations in India and ultimately to support an insurgency in Tibet.

---

[44] Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.03. Some of this quote was rearranged to make more sense in English.

[45] Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 48 (emphasis added).

[46] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.03.

After this incident, the training of the other four Khambas continued, but the incident illustrates the serious disjuncture between the interests and objectives of the CIA and the Khambas right from the start. Washington's view of what it was doing with respect to the Khamba insurgency was far removed from what the Khambas wanted and expected.[47] As mentioned, they saw themselves in the midst of a bloody struggle with the PLA in Litang so needed more sophisticated modern automatic weapons, explosives, machine guns, mortars and so forth, and training how to use them. And of course, they also critically needed a reliable and steady source of supplies of equipment and ammunition. However, despite Gyalo Thondup's exaggerated promises to them, it quickly became apparent that the training was mostly communications, and this was an unwelcome surprise and disappointment for this first batch of CIA Tibetan trainees.

This incident, however, apparently pushed the CIA to decide to try to appease the remaining four by giving them more of what they wanted, as Lotse wrote:

> Then the four of us continued our studies and after three months we were well trained in wireless. . . . *Besides that, in accordance with our earnest requests that they give us some new [kinds of] training,* we received training in the use of bombs, and training in how to destroy houses, bridges, vehicles, airports, trains, oil tank storage dumps, et cetera. There were many different kinds of bombs . . . and hand grenades and time bombs. And they taught us how to use them by attaching them to cannon shells. We were also taught how to use cannons and fire machine guns. And we were also trained how to make relations with the people in Tibet after we arrive there, and if we were [going to be] arrested by the Chinese, we were trained how to do hand-to-hand combat to save ourselves, and we also were taught how to create organizations. They trained us for one more month, so the total training time became four months. We were also trained in giving medical treatment and parachuting from planes, and these were all done well.[48]

Athar also commented on this aspect, saying,

> We were also taught how to use various kinds of explosives to destroy such targets as houses, tanks, airfields, railways, and gasoline storage facilities.[49]

---

[47] Taktse Rinpoche was also angry at the training the Americans provided. When he left Kalimpong, he was "hopeful that with American help we might be able to do something," but later he changed, explaining "What should I say, honestly speaking, they just fooled us. . . . It was for their own information. There was nothing that would be helpful for us. . . So we got fooled. We [were like] villagers." (Taktse Rinpoche, interview, USA, 1993 [H.0071.01]). Roger McCarthy mentioned that Takse was so angry that he and his servant refused to work with the CIA after Saipan. (phone conversation, 13 December 1995).

[48] Blo tshe (Lotse) 2001, 9.

[49] A thar Nor bu (Athar) 2004, 24–25.

Then, roughly five months after arriving, it was time for the Khambas to return to Tibet and try to put their newly learned skills to use.[50]

BACK TO EAST PAKISTAN AND TIBET

At this point, another significant disagreement surfaced when the American chief trainer and Taktse Rinpoche (his translator) informed Athar that he and one other Khamba would be sent to Central Tibet (Lhasa), while the other four would go to Litang in Sichuan. Athar was shocked to hear this and categorically refused to go. He explained his reaction:

> I [said I] will not go to Lhasa. I had never wanted to go to Lhasa. . . . I don't know any Tibetan government officials [Tib. kudrak] or soldiers there, and since some of those people are pro-Chinese, they will hand us over to the Chinese like they did with Alo Chöndze. . . .[51] From the start we were thinking of going to Kham. What are we going to do in Central Tibet? It never occurred to us to fight there. We really did not want to go there because we didn't think anything would be accomplished by it. We were sure that with [new] weapons we could fight in Kham. We said from the beginning that we were going to fight in Kham. Our land was fighting the communists and they [the rebels] had no arms and so we needed [to get] arms [for them]. So this was our goal. . . . So [I said] please don't send me there. I want to go to Kham where my relatives are and where the people from my area [Litang] have been fighting with the Chinese since before.[52]

This, of course, posed a serious problem for the Americans, since one of the main goals of the training program was to produce Tibetans who would be able to make direct contact with Phala/Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in order to ascertain firsthand their needs and plans. This was absolutely essential if anything more was going to happen, because the State Department had insisted that it would not agree to supplying arms to the Khambas without a request from the Dalai Lama/Tibetan government. Roger McCarthy, the main CIA trainer on Saipan, has written about that, saying "Before final approval was given to the CIA to proceed with the initial supply drops, there was a requirement levied on the Agency that "The Tibetan Government," i.e., the Dalai Lama, first needed to request U.S. assistance."[53] Since Athar was the best at encryption and wireless communication, not having him in Lhasa might compromise the entire operation, as in fact happened with the team going to Litang, which lost its better wireless transmitter and was unable to communicate adequately with Langley.

---

[50] It is difficult to assess with certainty how long their training was. McCarthy said four and a half months, Lotse said four months, and Athar said he was sure it was six months from when they left from India to when he was parachuted into Tibet. Some of this apparently depends on whether the training refers only to Siapan or to Saipan and Okinawa, and to those months plus the time back in East Pakistan waiting to be dropped into Tibet.

[51] Alo Chöndze's "detention," was really a faux detention. For details on this incident see Goldstein 2014, 207–21.

[52] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.01; Athar interview, India, 1993, H.0007.05; Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 9–10.

Persuading Athar to go to Lhasa, therefore, was a major priority, and Taktse Rinpoche pressed Athar to agree, explaining to him for the first time that there was a larger plan that encompassed more than just fighting in Litang and Kham. Only a full revolt all over Tibet, he told Athar, could push the Chinese out, and this was only feasible with U.S. support. And for the United States to provide that aid, it wanted a request from the Dalai Lama and his government. Taktse Rinpoche therefore replied to Athar,

> Please don't say things like that. You are good at sending wireless communications and you are the one who can receive the most messages, and we need the best wireless operator to go to Tibet, because if the communications get fouled up there, there will be difficulties [in being able to send aid]. . . . Just doing something in Kham will not be helpful. *Andrutsang is making an organization in Lhasa and the [Tibetan] government will also do something. The Tibetan Government officials have a plan to oppose the Chinese, so you have to be able send that information back right away. . . . Without the Tibetan Government and others [joining the resistance and making this a united effort over all of Tibet and Kham], it won't work. Just [fighting in] Kham, and especially just fighting in Litang, will not be of any use.* Consequently, you must go to Tibet."[54]

Athar's reaction shows that Gombo Tashi must have been convinced to fight in Tibet after Athar left Lhasa, because Athar had never heard anything like that. Going to Central Tibet was clearly not what the young Khambas had in mind when they went to Kalimpong to seek external assistance; they had gone there to secure help for themselves and their countrymen to defeat the PLA in Litang and the surrounding Khamba areas, and this is what Taiwan had offered them before Gyalo Thondup intervened. Expanding the revolt to Tibet proper was not something they were thinking about or interested in.

On the other hand, this broader view was something that the Dalai Lama's brothers and JKTS, as well as the Dalai Lama's close advisor Phala, had held for some time. For example, as mentioned in chapter 2, the message the Crown Prince of Sikkim delivered to the U.S. Consul General in Calcutta in 1956 specifically mentioned the need for weapons so that the uprising in Sichuan could be spread throughout Tibet.

---

53. Roger McCarthy, phone conversation, 13 December 1995. Also see McCarthy 1997, 241.
54. Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.05.

Taktse's comment also suggests that it must have been Taktse and his brother Gyalo Thondup who were telling the Americans, incorrectly, that the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government were committed to fighting against the Chinese.

Athar, however, was too angry to think about the merits of a larger pan-Tibet insurgency strategy, and just reiterated to Taktse Rinpoche, "I am sorry, but I am unable to go. From the beginning, I came here for my homeland [Litang], so now I want to go to my homeland. I am not going to Lhasa. Half of the Tibetan government's officials have turned towards the Chinese and half of them have turned towards us, but we don't know who is good and who is bad because we are just like muleteers and horsemen [ignorant of larger issues and nuances of Lhasa culture]; we are not elites."[55]

This negative attitude toward Lhasa is not surprising, because Khambas like Athar looked down on, and distrusted, the Lhasa government elite and Central Tibetans in general. And similarly, the Tibetan government's officials saw Khambas as stupid, uncouth, and rash. The Tibetan officials stationed in Chamdo before Tibet's incorporation into the PRC in 1951, for example, used to say that "the ears of Khambas are located in their asses," meaning they only understood things after being whipped on their asses.[56]

Moreover, at this time the Khambas of Sichuan did not see themselves as parts of a larger Tibetan nation whose capital was Lhasa and whose government was the Lhasa government. In fact, the terms currently used for Tibet and for Tibetans—"Pö" and "Pöba"—were not used in that way at this time. It was really only people in the areas north of the Tsangpo River around Lhasa, the region Tibetans called Ü, that considered themselves pöba. Consequently, if you asked a Khamba if he was a Pöba, he would say no, I am a Khamba.[57] So to Athar, Tibet was not his country, and the government of the Dalai Lama was not his government, although the Dalai Lama was his lama and the lama of all Tibetans.

The Americans, of course, wanted ST CIRCUS to succeed and correctly understood that Athar gave them the best chance for this, so they continued to try to change his mind. Athar said that when they continued to pressure him, he thought about it and then finally asked Taktse Rinpoche what he was expected to do in Lhasa. Taktse told him the following:

---

[55] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.03. Lotse, however, said that Taktse emphasized the well-being of the Dalai Lama: "I can't tell you that you should do this or that, but now it is like His Holiness the Dalai Lama is in a crocodile's mouth and if the crocodile shuts its mouth, then everything is finished. At this extremely dangerous point, please, you two think about this and make your decision" (Blo Tshe [Lotse] 2001, 10). Presumably he used both of these arguments.

[56] In Tibetan: khambe amjo gubla yö.

[57] After the Dalai Lama went into exile, an overall term for Tibet was needed in the modern sense of American or Chinese or Indian, and pöba came to be used to connote all Tibetans.

> You know that Gombo Tashi and Chushigandru have started an organization and they are doing their best, and these days this organization is getting better. So you two need to go there and give them your best effort. Do your intelligence work and contact Gombo Tashi, who will handle all the relations with the Tibetan government. You two have to do your share and Gombo Tashi will do his. So the two of you will have to meet only with the Lord Chamberlain Phala and Gombo Tashi. You won't have to meet anybody else [other officials, or *kudrak*]."[58]

These arguments and the fact that the pressure was coming from the Dalai Lama's older brother finally weakened Athar's opposition.

> [Now] I thought that if things could be done like this and we only had to meet with Gombo Tashi who then would contact Phala for us, then maybe it was all right. So I told him that I would think about it. He said, "You must decide soon since the time to leave is nearing . . . and we need to make preparations." He told me to come back tomorrow.[59]

That night, Athar thought carefully about Taktse's comments and decided that what the Americans and Taktse Rinpoche were saying made sense. He explained,

> What he said got me thinking, and it seemed to be true. If we didn't move [against the Chinese] from everywhere, and if we just continued where there was now guerilla warfare as in Litang, then even if we got arms [from the U.S.], we couldn't manage [to defeat the Chinese]. . . . At this point . . . he asked me who I wanted to take with me. I replied, 'It doesn't matter who you send, but that person has to be well and physically fit, because if one of us gets sick, it will be difficult if the other isn't fit.' So Taktse told me, 'Based on wireless ability, you are the best and the second best is Baba Jangra Tashi, so you two are the main ones [for accomplishing the communications mission]. So since you and Lotse seem to get on well and even share the same living quarters, why don't you take Lotse. Then Baba Jangra Tashi can go with Tsewang Dorje [who knew Chinese] to Litang. . . . Please accept this plan." I told him that I will discuss this with Lotse.[60]

Athar actually discussed this not only with Lotse, but with all the others, as he explained:

> So we [trainees] met and discussed what they said and what we should do. We had been told that we are not even allowed to tell each other where we are going, but we told each other about this . . . because we came here with the same goal and trusted each other. Finally, we decided to go in two groups; one [Athar and Lotse] going upwards [to Central Tibet] and one going downwards [to Litang in Sichuan].[61]

---

[58] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.01.

[59] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.03.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.05.

With this settled, their trainers asked them whether they preferred returning to Tibet walking overland or being dropped by plane, and they opted for parachuting because going on foot would be too slow and dangerous. Consequently, a final stint of parachute training was carried out at the U.S. Kadena Air Base on Okinawa, where the geography was less rocky and thus more amenable to parachute training. At this point they were reunited with Wangdü and Chö Bulü. It is not clear where they had been kept during the intervening months.

After practicing jumping from platforms and towers, the six Khambas took a number of actual parachute drops from aircraft, some during the day and some at night. And although they had never done this or even heard of this before leaving Tibet, they loved this part of their training and came to be famous within the halls of the CIA for their fearless attitude toward jumping.[62] Athar explained his feelings about parachuting in an interview, saying they were all proud and thrilled to be doing this. Although unsophisticated in history and politics, and not even sure geographically where they were, they understood that Tibetans had to have knowledge of and access to much more modern and deadly weapons and equipment than they now were utilizing, and parachuting out of an airplane from thousands of feet above the ground symbolized precisely the kind of new and modern skills they had wanted to learn from the Americans. Athar explained,

> We felt that we wanted to do something that we had never done before. For us it was like sending people on the moon which had never been done before. At that time, the Tibetan people had never been parachuted anywhere, so doing this was some kind of great modern thing, right? So we were very happy to be parachuted. So when we were asked, “Do you want to go back [to Tibet] walking or do you want us to drop you in Tibet?” We said, “Please drop us. If you don’t parachute us, we would have to take the wireless equipment through the border and it is so far. Walking from Kalimpong, it would take three to four months to get to Litang and on the way there was a danger that we would get killed by the Chinese, so then you couldn’t use us.” We were told by our [trainers] to sign our names on something and after we did that, they started our parachute training. . . . We made seven practice jumps there. . . .[63] we also sang while in the sky. It was really a happy time for us. We had no fear at all. . . .[64] After all of the training was over, we were the first group dropped into Tibet.

---

[62] Frank Holober, interview, USA, 1993.

[63] Lotse said they made six jumps, three at night and three during the day (Blo Tshe [Lotse] 2001, 11).

[64] It should be noted that not all Khambas from Litang felt that way. One Khamba who declined to go for training to America in 1959 explained, “The government told me that they will send me to America if I want. I also thought of going to America, but at that time I got a letter from the ones who were then in America that said, “Don’t come to America. They are throwing people from the sky. It is like throwing stones from the sky and people are disappearing.” So I said I am not going to America and will stay in Kalimpong” (Lobsang Palden, interview, India, 1992, H.0034.01).

> When this was completed, each of us were given a full set of Tibetan clothing (chupa), a small aluminum pot with a handle, a small thermos flask that could hold a cup of tea, and they gave each of us two loaves of bread. Then we were taken into the military barracks and given a Japanese-made wireless unit, an instrument for fixing times / timer [Tib. dus tshod bzo byed], a calendar, a Tibetan/English wireless codebook, twelve maps of Tibet made in New York, and a blanket. . . . Each of us was also given a pistol called kanathar, a small submachine gun, two hand grenades, a little more than one thousand bullets, one hundred dotse of Tibetan currency, and one hundred dayan of Chinese silver coins.[65]
>
> When we prepared for the departure, we carried the submachine gun on our front (strung across our chests) together with quite a lot of bullets on our waists. We carried the hand grenades in a bag, and carried the map and the blanket on our backs. Our preparations were well done. Then the teachers checked us in detail and said that we are good to go.
>
> The day after it was settled that we were departing in a week, they took us to the firing range because we were fond of shooting guns. However, while we were doing lots of target shooting, Tsewang Dorje's gun accidentally went off and shot him in his foot. He was taken to the hospital for treatment, and while it was not very serious and he returned that same evening, our trainers said that he would go back with us to Pakistan, but if he did not recover in time to jump, we will decide what should be done then.[66]

The Khambas were flown from Okinawa to Kurmitola airfield outside of Dacca in East Pakistan in late September or early October 1957, where the final plans for dropping them into Tibet and Litang were worked out. Kurmitola was an airfield that had been used in the Second World War, but had become overgrown with grass and vegetation, so the airfield was being renovated by about five or six hundred American soldiers solely for the Khamba operation. Since there was no electricity, Athar recalled that when they took off or landed, fires had to be set—cans of kerosene were lit.[67]

The aerial part of the the CIA's covert operation was code-named ST BARNUM and involved a B-17 airplane that belonged to the CIA air fleet on Taiwan. It had been painted black, and all of its guns and national markings had been removed. It was flown by a Polish immigrant crew, since the United States wanted complete deniability should the plane fall into Chinese hands.[68]

There were no good maps of Tibet, so one of the trainers explained that they managed visually. "The only maps we had were the old British maps, and rivers and riverbanks don't change that much, so fortunately that worked out well."[69] Because of this, flights had to be made around the time of the full moon when large geographic markers could be seen for navigation, so there was actually only about one week each month when airdrops could be made.

---

[65] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.01. McCarthy (1997, 241) gives a slightly different list, but not significantly so. Gyadotsang told JKTS in Kalimpong the news he just received from Tibet and mentioned that they were carrying cyanide pills (Shakabpa diary, entry for 3 December 1957).

[66] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.01.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Leeker 2006, 1. See also Conboy and Morrison 2002, 55–65.

The CIA was finally ready to parachute its newly trained assets back into Tibet and Litang during the full-moon period of October 1957. The story of these Khamba trainees will be examined in chapter 4.

---

[69] Roger McCarthy, phone interview, 13 February 1995.

4

The CIA, Phala, and Chushigandru

The CIA's Tibet Project moved to the next stage when the CIA-trained Khambas were flown into Tibet during the night of the full moon of the eighth Tibetan lunar month (8 October 1957).[1] The plan called for Athar and Lotse to jump along the bank of the Yarlungtsangpo River near the famous monastery of Samye, after which their B-17 would continue east to Litang to drop off the three other Khambas (Wangdü, Chö Bulü, and Jangra Tashi).[2] However, the weather did not cooperate, so that evening all had to return to East Pakistan. Weather forecasts continued to be bad for the next four days, but then on 13 October, the last day of the full-moon window of opportunity for that month, the B-17 set off again with the Khambas. Athar was sure about the date because he had also left for the initial training on that day and recalled joking with his fellow Khambas about the coincidence of this being the same date.[3]

On this attempt, the skies in Central Tibet were clear, so Athar, Lotse, and their equipment landed successfully on site in the heartland of Central Tibet. However, when the B-17 flew on to Litang, it again ran into bad weather so returned to Pakistan, and the Khambas had to wait until the next full-moon period in November to try again. This delay was actually beneficial in one sense, since it allowed the wounded Tsewang Dorje time to recover, and when they tried again in early November, all four remaining Khamba trainees flew to Litang. Bad luck, however, continued to plague the second team, as Baba Jangra Tashi, the best wireless operator of the team, had an attack of high-altitude hypoxia, so was unable to make the jump with the other three and had to be taken back to East Pakistan. The second team's task was to make contact with the insurgents fighting in Litang and report back detailed information on the situation there while arranging for airdrops of weapons for the insurgents. They were instructed not to take control of the existing insurgent groups or organize their own insurgent units, but to act as support and training staff. The CIA wanted to help existing Tibetan insurgents, not create their own insurgent force.[4]

---

[1] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.01; Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 13. Leeker supports this date, stating the first flight took off in early October 1957 (Leeker 2006, 1). Conboy and Morrison (2001, 71) don't give specific dates, but their general discussion is consistent with those of Athar and Lotse. The equivalent Western date comes from the calendar at www.kalacakra.org/calendar/tdate/pl_1957.txt (accessed 1 July 2013).

[2] Tsewang Dorje, the fourth Khamba scheduled for Litang, had accidentally shot himself on Okinawa and had not healed sufficiently, so he remained in East Pakistan (Blo Tshe [Lotse] 2001, 11).

[3] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.01.

Their mission, however, was unsuccessful, as Athar explained,

> Gyado Wangdü and the others who went to Kham, were not able to do a proper job. They were able to meet up with a group of Litang insurgents, but the fighting had already started there, so they needed an immediate drop of arms and ammunition. However, they were never able to communicate well enough to set up drop zones. As I mentioned to you earlier, two of them, Wangdü and his servant, had refused to study wireless communication. . . . That left only one person able to send messages, and he didn't know how to do that well.
>
> Moreover, before one can ask for an airdrop, there were a great many things that one had to get ready and they were not able to do those. For example, they had to see if there are any problems if the plane comes over a specific area. For example, how close are the Chinese and is there a chance the arms will fall into their hands. So all the detailed signals must be given, otherwise a drop can't be made. The drop zone has to be a very safe and secretive place. All this has to be ready. One has to say this is the first [site], then the second [alternative site] and then the third, and you have to indicate whether there is radar nearby or if soldiers are chasing you. All this must be indicated. *However, because the Litang insurgents with whom they had linked up with were already in combat with the Chinese, they had to move frequently and had no safe haven where they could ensure a safe drop.* So I think they were not able to give the proper communication signals and drop-zone information, so the Americans did not make any airdrops to them.[5]

This incident illustrates how difficult it would have been for the CIA to arm and supply a large-scale insurgency in Tibet entirely by air, especially when drops could only be made during a few-day period each month.[6]

---

[4] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.02.

[5] Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.03.

[6] The CIA had no option but to use clandestine airdrops, because the Indian government would not allow the United States to ship weapons and supplies to Tibet via their territory.

Ultimately, of the three that were parachuted in, Tsewang Dorje and Bulü were killed in Litang, while the third, Wangdü, managed to escape overland, reaching Chushigandru in Lhoka in the fall of 1958, where he was reunited with the team of Athar and Lhotse. Jangra Tashi, the fourth Khamba who was unable to jump that day, went overland from Kalimpong and arrived in Litang in 1958, but he too was killed there.[7] In the end, the Litang part of the ST CIRCUS trial was a total failure, and up to the time the Dalai Lama fled to India, not a single gun had been dropped to the insurgents in Litang or Kham. Radru Ngawang, a senior Chushigandru commander from Litang, reminisced sadly, "At that point, they didn't get the weapons. However, if they [the CIA] had been able to drop weapons, whether or not the weapons were highly useful or not, there would have been many chances to kill Chinese."[8]

In contrast, the mission of Lotse and Athar was a striking operational success. At that time, the members of the newly formed Chushigandru organization were all residing in Lhasa, so there was no actual ongoing insurgency in Tibet to drop weapons to. Nevertheless, the mission in Lhasa was of critical importance to the CIA. The CIA's argument to the Eisenhower administration was that the best chance for an insurgency in China to succeed would be if the insurgency occurred in all Tibetan areas, that is, in Tibet as well as Sichuan. And that seemed feasible, because, as mentioned, they had been led to believe that the Dalai Lama and his government were making such plans by Gyalo Thondup and Taktse Rinpoche, the Dalai Lama's two elder brothers, as well as by the message the Sikkim Crown Prince had brought from the Dalai Lama's advisors in Lhasa in the summer of 1956.

The main goal of Athar and Lotse's mission, therefore, was to meet Phala/Dalai Lama and find out what their plans were to oppose the Chinese and what assistance they wanted from the United States. Ken Knaus, a CIA officer involved with the Tibet Project in 1959, wrote that the goal of this mission was "to obtain the Dalai Lama's endorsement of the United States government's favorable response to his rebelling subjects' requests for arms." He also stated it was "to relay their request for the pontiff's blessing for America to provide arms to his subjects."[9]

This American overture, therefore, was a unique opportunity for the Dalai Lama to begin a major collaboration not only with the most powerful nation in the world, but also China's number one enemy. America finally appeared to be interested in providing concrete material support—guns, bullets, supplies, money, and so on—to assist an ongoing Tibetan insurrection in Sichuan and expand it to Tibet. During the Dalai Lama's stay in India, he had struggled to assess whether the secret talk of forthcoming American aid was real and, if real, what kind of a commitment the Americans had made. Now, America had sent two of the Khambas it had covertly trained to convey a secret message from the U.S. government to the Dalai Lama asking what he wanted and needed from America to oppose the Chinese.

---

[7] Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.04.

[8] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0014.02.

[9] Knaus 2012, 116–17.

Lotse recalled how their historic mission started.

> When we reached the drop site in Tibet, the pilot's assistant opened a door and a red light came on. I jumped out first, followed by Athar.[10] The weather was clear and from the air I could see what looked like three people running [on the ground], so I thought of driving them away and got the [Sten] gun [I was carrying strapped in front of me] ready [to fire at them]. However, when I got nearer, I saw that it wasn't other people, but was just our own shadows.
>
> We landed safely, about thirty to forty meters apart, and Athar immediately came to my side. . . . Soon after, we heard some dogs barking, and the sound seemed to be coming towards us, so we felt we didn't have time to untie the luggage ropes and just cut them with a knife and took out the wireless equipment. We saw a small black hill nearby . . . so we carried the luggage and the three parachutes over there and, after taking out the things we needed right away, like one of the [two] wireless sets, five pistols and rifles and quite a lot of bullets, we buried the remaining things . . . in seven pits that we dug. We covered the pits with earth and thorn bushes, . . . took measurements, and drew a detailed map [so we could find it later]. Then we climbed up that hill . . . and just as daylight broke, panting heavily, we reached the top. At that exact time two big crows made a circle around us and landed there, cawing in several different ways. According to Tibetan tradition, that was a sign of good fortune. We had already finished eating all the bread that we had brought, so we gave the crows a little piece of boiled meat that we had also brought from Pakistan, and then the crows flew away. From the top of the hill we looked with our binoculars in all four directions and saw that there was a park [Tib. lingga] about two hundred meters from us, and further on beyond that . . . we could see the gilded roof of the Samye Temple.[11]

The CIA was worried about airdrops, because they feared that the Chinese might hear the drone of the plane and then go on heightened alert for spies in Lhasa, so it instructed Athar and Lotse to stay in the countryside in secluded areas for about a month before going to Lhasa to meet Gombo Tashi.[12]

It is easy to imagine these two CIA-trained Khambas engaging in exciting and dangerous activities, finding new sources and passing on valuable intel. In reality, their first three to four weeks back in Tibet were rather plebian, with Athar and Lotse moving from place to place in the back country, attending to everyday things like buying horses, checking their equipment, finding food and shelter, and trying to get their wireless radios to work. Lotse recalled:

---

[10] The equipment package was dropped with the first parachute and was immediately followed by the two Khambas. It was attached to the first jumper by a "deployable line . . . to insure recovery" (McCarthy 1997, 241).

[11] Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 13–14.

[12] Athar, interviews, India, 1992 and 1993 (H.0007.01, .04, .06). In these different interviews, Athar gave different lengths of time they were told to stay out of Lhasa: one month, one month and eighteen days, and three months.

> From the top of the hill [near where they landed] . . . we saw a rider coming toward us from the direction of Samye, so my partner (Athar) went over to him [to check him out]. We asked him if he had seen our horses and mules, which, we said, had gotten lost, so we were out searching for them [which was their cover story]. The rider said he hadn't, and told us that he also was looking for his lost horses and mules. Athar assured him that there were none around here, so he left.
>
> In the afternoon [of what was their first day], . . . we started walking towards Tsetang [the main district headquarters of Lhoka]. When we were about halfway there, we came upon a person grazing a few horses, so we went over and told him that we were small-scale traders who can't walk any more [carrying our goods] so wanted to know if he had any horses for sale? He did, and pointed to a horse that he said we could buy. We agreed, but the horse wouldn't let us catch him, so the man finally said, "You can't catch it, so it will be best if you come to my home [and get the horse there]." We agreed and after the man left, decided that Athar would go to buy the horse as well as some tsamba and butter while I would wait for him outside of the village. [However, they were a bit nervous so] Athar said, "If something bad happens, I will use my gun." I agreed.[13]

Nothing, however, happened, and after having a leisurely meal of tsamba and local barley beer, Athar finally returned at about 10 P.M. The two immediately took the horse to where they had hidden the equipment and loaded some of it on the horse. Athar had been unable to buy a carrying saddle from the villager, so they had to use rope from the parachutes to tie a blanket on the back of the horse and fastened the equipment onto that. By the time they finished loading, it was around 2 A.M. However, since the moonlight was still bright, they kept moving on toward a place called Wölkha Chöling.[14] Lotse's narration continues,

> I was wearing a pair of new velvet Tibetan boots, which was causing a small sore on my foot, so at about 7 A.M. [of day two], we took a rest and ate tea and tsamba for breakfast, using the lids of our thermos bottles, since Athar had been unable to buy bowls from the farmer.
>
> We agreed that it was important for us to get to an out-of-the-way place, so we departed right after eating and found such a place at Yünphug, which was situated just before one reached Tsetang. There Athar was able to buy us two wooden bowls and another horse.[15]

---

[13] Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 15–16.

[14] Ibid., 15.

[15] Ibid.

On the next day [their third day], they got lost going to Wölkha, so on the day after that, they had to backtrack and stayed that evening at a small inn where they told people they were petty traders from Kham. On the next day [day 5], they arrived at Wölkha Chunjug and tried to send a message to the CIA at one of the prearranged times, but failed because they were unable to make a connection. So they packed their wireless equipment and went into the Wölkha Monastery, where they made offerings with some of the dayan coins the CIA had given them. Then they continued toward an estate where they expected to be able to stay that night, because they had heard the estate manager was a Khamba from Targye gomba [in Ganzi in Sichuan].

However, when they reached the estate, to their surprise and anger, the Khamba manager refused to let them stay in the manor house. He told them they had to stay outside near the estate's water mill. It was an extremely cold October night that looked like it was about to snow, and the two of them had only one blanket each, so after making tea for themselves, they went back to ask the estate manager again for lodgings. When he still refused, they were even more puzzled, since giving lodging to travelers was common. They finally learned what was going on when one of the estate's servants explained that the manager was afraid because there were six other Khambas like them in the vicinity [and he feared Athar and Lotse were with them and that they were bandits]. Understanding the problem now, Athar and Lotse went back to the estate manager and this time told him, "If you don't trust us, we will leave our guns with you, but please give us any kind of low-quality room [inside] just to sleep in."[16] The manager was responsible for the estate's possessions so still refused and told Athar and Lotse they had to spent the night in the cold at that water mill.[17] This trivial incident illustrates a key issue with respect to Chushigandru. In Central Tibet, Khambas were seen as dangerous outsiders with bad reputations, even by other Khambas working for Central Tibetans. Moreover, because of their distinctive Khamba dialect, Athar and Lotse could never pass themselves off as Central Tibetans.

Lotse continued,

> The next day [day 6], we went for a pilgrimage to the Chölung Monastery and offered our remaining dayan coins as alms. I finished the religious visit early, so I waited [for Athar] outside the monastery. When Athar came, he told me that the monks said we could stay overnight in their monastery, so we went in and ate dinner there. While we were eating, one of the monks told us, "This morning, six armed riders left this area saying they are going on a pilgrimage, so are those people with you?" I [said no but] asked them detailed questions about their ages and so forth and learned that two were older and the other four were young men.

[16] Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 16.

[17] Ibid.

> That night, we [again tried to] send a wireless message, but we couldn't hear anything, so I thought the wireless machine must be broken and opened it. It was indeed broken into two pieces, so we decided to go back to our original location to retrieve the second wireless we had hidden there. When we started to go [the next day, day 7], some people told us that the six armed Khamba riders had just left, so we went to the top of a hill and saw them in the distance. We [wanted to meet them], so we quickly loaded up the wireless set and equipment on my horse and sent Athar alone with just the light things on his horse in order to try to catch up with them.[18]

He reached them quickly and learned that they were all from Litang. Then they all stopped and waited for Lotse to catch up and when Lotse arrived, they all drank tea and talked about the situation in Lhasa.

> We learned that they were on a pilgrimage, and about how the Dalai Lama had been presented a golden throne. They also told us that Gombo Tashi had told them, "It is good for you to go a pilgrimage [to the holy lake at Chönkorgye], but please come back soon because the situation with the Chinese is not good. . . . " Then I said, "You people don't look like pilgrims. You look like people ready to fight battles, because you have good horses and weapons." [They explained to us that] Gombo Tashi nowadays was saying that all of us Khambas have to buy good horses and weapons, since the situation is not good."
>
> The six Litangbas also asked us questions. For example, they asked us if we were part of the group of Khambas who had gone abroad for training. And, if so, what happened with the training? We told them that we will tell them what we had done, but first they had to swear that they will never tell anybody about it. They agreed and took an oath saying that from now on they will end their pilgrimage and will help us and do whatever we two need. . . . We became very happy and relaxed, because now we were again with people from our homeland and we trusted each other. So the eight of us went together for two days to retrieve the other wireless set. The night we arrived there, four of us went to dig up the buried equipment . . . and then the next day we tried to send a wireless message from the top of the Gökhar La mountain pass. We were able to communicate a little bit, but when they asked us whether or not we are okay, the sound of the wireless was lost and we couldn't hear anything.
>
> The next day [day 9 or 10], we crossed to the other side of the Gökhar La Pass and sent four of the Khamba pilgrims back to Lhasa, telling one of the older Khambas to tell Gombo Tashi that we have arrived and are planning to meet with him in about a month. The other two Khambas, Sonam Tomden and Phüntso Gyatso, said they wanted to stay with us [so we agreed].[19]

Athar and Lotse also told the departing Khambas to tell Gombo Tashi not to tell other Tibetans about their arrival, because they were afraid their presence would get leaked to the Chinese and their mission would be compromised.[20] That warning, however, did not include Phala, who Gombo Tashi informed about the arrival of the two CIA Khambas. Radru Ngawang, Gombo Tashi's close aide, recalled, "Gombo Tashi told Phala that such and such persons [Athar and Lotse] had come to make contact with the Tibetan government, so what shall we do? Phala said, 'They are going to meet me, right?' When Gombo Tashi replied they will definitely meet you, Phala told him to keep the arrival of the two people a secret."[21]

---

[18] Ibid., 16–17.

[19] Ibid., 17–18.

Meeting their fellow countrymen was also fortunate, because, amazingly, the CIA had not given them enough money. Athar explained,

> The Americans had sent us off with 100 dotse in Tibetan currency and 100 Chinese dayan—that's all. . . . They told us that whatever money we needed we should get it through Gombo Tashi and Lord Chamberlain Phala, but when we arrived in Tibet, no money was given to us. The initial 100 dotse and 100 dayan was not an insignificant amount, but one of the horses we bought alone cost 100 dotse. So we took some loans from our fellow Litangpas. They had brought some things to sell to the villages, so we also bought those, and subsequently we posed sometimes as petty traders and sometimes as pilgrims, as we proceeded and did our work.[22]

Athar, Lotse, and the other two Litangpas continued moving north from Samye, bypassing Lhasa on the east. After over a month of this "work" in the countryside, the two decided it was time to get to Lhasa, so they made plans to finally meet Gombo Tashi and Phala.[23]

BACK IN LANGLEY

Successfully establishing wireless contact with Athar and Lotse produced a collective sigh of relief in Langley. They had actually expected to receive a message almost immediately, so had brought the Kalmyk monk Geshe Wangye to Washington from New Jersey to translate what would be the "famous" first coded message from Tibet. When day after day passed with no message, there was concern that something untoward had happened, with speculation ranging from technical problems with the wireless equipment to having been killed or captured. Then when momentary contact was established from Tibet after about a week of waiting, there was relief because it showed they were still alive. Finally, on about day 14 or 15, the two were able to get their backup transmitter working and sent the first clear message saying that they were safely on the ground and working.

---

[20] A thar Nor bu (Athar) 2004, 38.

[21] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2002, H.0012.05.

[22] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.01. They were finally able to repay their debts in the summer of 1958 after they all had moved to Lhoka, when a Khamba sent from India by Gyalo Thondup brought them 3,000 Indian rupees for their expenses. Athar said that they used this INR 3,000 to repay debts, and then were again low on cash with only 200 rupees left!

[23] A thar Nor bu (Athar) 2004, 38; Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.04. Also see Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2002, H.0012.05.

Frank Holober, the CIA's Tibet Project desk officer, recalled the day that message arrived.

> Then all of a sudden all these numbers came in [but there was no one to translate them, since Geshe Wangye had been sent back to New Jersey], so I said we will get a translator to come tomorrow. Broe [his boss and Chief of the China Branch] was pissed at me for not having someone [a translator] ready and chewed me out. I had to go to the NSA and get Stuart Buck to come and help read it.[24] I had brought the message home with me, so he came to my house. He tried to translate it, but one of the problems [he encountered] was that the senders often mispelled words.[25] Buck, however, made a partial translation. The problem was the [poor Tibetan] spelling, but Geshe [Wangye, when he was there] could in most cases figure out what they were trying to say [by context]." There was lots of interest in [this] in the agency. I got calls from all kinds of people wanting to know what was going on with them. I was the fair-haired boy in the whole Far Eastern Division. I had the most exotic project.[26]

Washington now was looking forward to getting answers about the Dalai Lama's needs and plans, as well as about Chushigandru and the general situation in and around Lhasa. John Reagan explained that the CIA was hoping they would get useful information on things like: "How the Chinese were progressing in taking over the country and what was the Tibetan potential for resistence. For example, were there organized groups, recognized leaders, rural support areas that they could operate out of, or were they located in Lhasa, [and about] the communications between the various groups fighting, and were they making common cause."[27] And, of course, Langley was testing to see if these hastily trained Khambas could actually perform usefully in the field, i.e., avoid capture, make contacts, collect information, and send and receive wireless messages.

In the following months, Langley was in regular communication with Athar and Lotse, but whereas receiving regular coded messages from Tibet was terrific, they were never able to collect high-value intelligence information of the type Reagan mentioned. Holober commented on this, saying that when the first transmission came, "We were all excited, [but] it was a big disappointment as it only said something like, "I arrived and am well." It was like a postcard from a vacation. So there was a drop in enthusisam as a result of this."[28] Holober also said the intelligence did not improve much with time and was not very useful, “We were very frustrated about the lines of communication. It all was so remote and took so long to get messages in or out. And the Tibetans were never good at intelligence. We never got any personal stuff from them such as I met X and he said Y. It was all very short, and cut and dry.”[29] Holober explained further why this, of course, was not particularly surprising,

---

[24] Buck had been studying Tibetan and used a dictionary to try to translate it. He later compiled and published a Tibetan-English dictionary (Buck 1969).

[25] This was discussed in detail in chapter 3.

[26] Holober, interview, USA, 1995.

[27] Reagan, interview, USA, 1993.

[28] Holober, interview, USA, 1995.

> You couldn’t just take somebody with their level of educational and train them. With what they knew about the world, giving them three months of training, a lot of which was weapons and jumping and stuff like that; you couldn’t expect to get a very high level of intelligence reporting beyond what is in their own culture and what they are used to. This is something that takes years. I personally was looking forward to a situation that would develop. I saw this as just the beginning. I was disappointed, but not surprised, when the first reports that came back were just infantile gibberish.
>
> Q. What kinds of things were they saying?
>
> A. I don’t even remember. A lot of it was just I went to a park yesterday and saw so and so. He didn’t have much to say. Just stuff like that.[30]

Despite this pejorative appraisal, Athar and Lotse’s main mission was not the collection of intel about the Tibetan government or the Chinese, but rather was to make direct contact with the Dalai Lama and Phala. As mentioned earlier, the CIA had been led to believe that the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government wanted to, and were discussing, plans to oppose the Chinese, so the general idea was that Chushigandru and the Tibetan government/Dalai Lama could join together, and with American covert help, actively oppose the Chinese in both Tibet and Sichuan. However, to accomplish this, the U.S. government wanted to ascertain firsthand the views, plans, and needs of the Tibetan government/Dalai Lama regarding the Chinese. Athar and Lotse’s job was to establish relations with Phala through Gombo Tashi and, if possible, the Dalai Lama through Phala, and then immediately communicate the Dalai Lama’s answer back to Langley. As will be seen below, they successfully accomplished that mission, albeit not with the result Washington expected and wanted.

ATHAR AND LOTSE MEET PHALA

In late November 1957,[31] the main work of the Tibet mission began when Athar and Lotse met Gombo Tashi on the outskirts of Lhasa, where there was less risk of the two of them being recognized. They, of course, knew Gombo Tashi well, since he had originally sent them from Lhasa to Kalimpong as part of the group of twenty-seven young Khambas. Gombo Tashi was also communicating and working with Gyalo Thondup and JKTS, so he knew all about the American training project. Athar, when asked about this, said emphatically, "He knew everything. . . . We even received a letter [from him] at Guam [he means Saipan] while we were training.'"[32] Athar and Lotse, therefore, spoke frankly to Gombo Tashi, describing the different kinds of training they had received and the kinds of weapons they had utilized, and they asked him to arrange a meeting with the Dalai Lama, or if that was not possible, with Phala.[33]

---

[29] Holober, interview, USA, 1993.

[30] Holober, interview, USA, 1995.

[31] Athar and Lotse give no date for this first face-to-face meeting, but Shakabpa’s diary entry for 3 December 1957 says that Gyadotsang (who was the Kalimpong liaison with Gombo Tashi) told JKTS the news that Athar and Lotse recently arrived in Lhasa.

This was an exhilarating time for Gombo Tashi. Radru Ngawang, one of Gombo Tashi's closest Litang associates in Chushigandru, recalled meeting Gombo Tashi one day and being told excitedly by him that he had some terrific news (Tib. damsang)—Athar and Lotse had returned from training to establish relations with the Tibetan government and that meant we probably will soon be getting *whatever weapons we need* by airdrops.[34] So this phase started off with high expectations for the Khamba leaders in Lhasa. Gombo Tashi told Athar and Lotse that he would send them a message when the meeting with Phala was arranged, and about a month later, they were notified to come to meet Phala the following morning in Norbulinga, the Dalai Lama's summer palace. Afraid of being recognized, they disguised themselves in monk's robes and, together with Gombo Tashi, went to Norbulinga.[35] They were excited because Gombo Tashi had told them that Phala said they were to be given an audience with the Dalai Lama, which was important, since they wanted to present the verbal message from the American government to him in person.[36] They had been sent not to work with Chushigandru but to secure a response from the Dalai Lama. Athar explained,

> For the two of us, this audience was not only a matter of religion [i.e. seeking just a religious audience], but we had to get an audience for political reasons. The Americans had told us that we must specially go to meet the Dalai Lama, and after reporting everything to him, ask him whether a work plan [for opposing the Chinese] could be accomplished.[37]

---

[32] Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.04.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Mda' zur Li thang dbra phrug ngag dbang (Radru Ngawang) 2008, 218.

[35] Some of information in this section comes from comments Gyadotsang made to JKTS's Khenjung telling him that a messenger from Lhasa told him that this is what the two of them told Andrutsang (Shakabpa's diary, entry for 3 December 1957).

[36] A thar Nor bu (Athar) 2004, 38–39. In Tibetan: de mtshams a 'brug sbyin bdag dang/ mgron gnyer gnyis bka' mol byung rjes gong sa mchog mjal kha gtang gi yin/ sang sga bar 'khrid shog gsung 'dug pa bka' dgong bzhin nor gling pho brang du bcar skabs de ring mdzad brel che bas sku bcar zhu sa med lugs kyi lo rgyus mang dag cig gsung te mjal kha ma thob.

[37] A thar Nor bu (Athar) 2004, 40. In Tibetan: ngos gnyis nas zhal mjal tsam ma zad chab srid kyi thog nas bcar rgyu de red/ rtsa ba'i a ri'i gzhung gis ngos gnyis gong sa mchog gi sku mdun ched bcar gyis gnas tshul cha tshang zhus te las don sgrub dang/ mi bsgrub bka' 'dri zhu dgos gsungs yod.

However, when they met Phala, they were disappointed to learn that they would not be meeting the Dalai Lama. Phala told them that he had informed the Dalai Lama about this, but it is not possible to meet him because he was very busy, and because they feared the news of such a meeting [with Khambas who the Chinese considered were American spies] might leak out, since there were many Chinese around the palace. However, to alleviate some of their disappointment and show that the Dalai Lama appreciated their efforts, Phala gave them some religious items that he said the Dalai Lama had blessed specially for them.[38] Athar and Lotse, therefore, ended up having to discuss their mission with Phala, whom they asked:

> What dangers are there facing the power of the Dalai Lama? What dangers are there facing the Dalai Lama's life? How do the Communist Chinese interfere with the political power of Tibet? [What is] the power of the Communist Chinese and what kind of hardships do the Tibetan people have because of the Chinese, how are the Chinese putting pressure by using (their) power on the political power of Tibet? What kind of benefits and difficulties are there regarding the livelihood of the Tibetan people? What is the Chinese viewpoint regarding the monks engaged in religious practice, and how are the monks engaged in religious practice controlling the Chinese? What kind of opinions does the Tibetan government have? What kind of plans do you have regarding opposing the Communist Chinese by armed force or by doing work in a secret manner?[39]

Athar elaborated on this in an interview saying,

> What kinds of plans do you have? You should submit the information and the plans to us and tell us what you are going to do? What do you have to tell us? You should tell us whether you are going to oppose [the Chinese] secretly or are you going to use force to oppose them (openly)? . . . and how are you going to revolt against the Chinese? What is your plan? From the Tibetan intelligence side, what kind of military and civil methods are you taking? From what angle should we provide assistance? Should we help from the intelligence side, militarily or peacefully? In what kind of aspects are you going to make the [resistance] movement? So we were saying that they [the Americans] wanted to see plans.[40]

Athar said he also told Phala, "It is our duty to transmit these to the United States and then we will report back to you whatever answers we get from them. So please consider what we have told you."[41] Phala's immediate response was only the

---

38. Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2003, 35. Also see Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.01.
39. A thar Nor bu (Athar) 2004, 39–40.
40. Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.01.
41. A thar Nor bu (Athar) 2004, 39–40.

terse and noncommittal, "We will discuss this. I can't make the decision on this by myself.[42]

Contrary to what the Americans had been told by Taktse Rinpoche, Gyalo Thondup, and the Crown Prince of Sikkim, the Dalai Lama and Phala *had absolutely* ***no*** *plans for the Tibetan government to oppose Chinese rule, and were not discussing making such plans.* The Dalai Lama, as mentioned earlier, had returned to Lhasa on 1 April 1957 to work to improve relations with the Chinese so as to maintain Tibet's rights under the Seventeen-Point Agreement. Consequently, the American government's queries via the two Khambas both came as a shock and posed a real dilemma about how to respond. Given the absence of any such opposition plans, it is, therefore, not surprising that Phala's immediate response was terse and noncommittal. However, it is significant that Phala, despite his strong anti-Chinese commitment, conveyed no inkling of encouragement, for example, by telling the two that this is wonderful news and we are excited about the prospects of working with the United States. Nor did he answer one aspect of the State Departmemt's questions by saying that while we have no plans now, we support the U.S. government supplying the Khamba insurgents with arms and training.

Nevertheless, Athar and Lotse had no problem waiting for the answer; they spent their time hanging around the outskirts of Lhasa collecting and transmitting small bits of information. But as days turned into weeks and weeks into months, Athar and Lotse got increasingly concerned and anxious, because they were being pressed by Washington about when the Dalai Lama would respond, but they had nothing to report, since they had *not heard even a single word* from Phala, nor had they been given any idea about when they would receive such a response. Athar and Lotse were taken aback by this silence and did not understand what was going on. Why wouldn't the Dalai Lama and Phala (the Tibetan government) want serious support against the Chinese from the United States? They had fully expected to receive a very positive response based on what they had heard from their CIA trainers and from Taktse Rinpoche. Based on this, they expected the issue was to be what kind of aid and support Tibet wanted, not whether or not to ask for support at all.

Athar and Lotse, therefore, asked Gombo Tashi to arrange another meeting with Phala so they could inquire about a response. To their further surprise, and now dismay, Phala refused to see them in person, informing them that they should henceforth meet with a monk official named Kelsang Ngawang, who was working under him as an aide (Tib. tsendrön) in the Dalai Lama's Secretariat Office. Athar said of this,

---

42. Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.01.

> So we were not allowed to see Phala and had to meet him [Kelsang]. He lived near the Lingkor Road (the Outer Circumambulation Road) in Lhasa, so it was easy to meet him. We didn't need to disguise ourselves as monks and could just go there wearing Khamba-style clothing. . . . Gombo Tashi, Lotse, and I went repeatedly to meet Kelsang Ngawang to ask him what Phala wanted to do [about America's query], but he told us nothing about anything. So we got desperate.[43]

Athar's frustration and anger can also be seen in the following, somewhat testy, comment on what was transpiring:

> From the Tibetan government's side, from Lord Chamberlain Phala's side, not an inkling of a plan was given. That's how it was. Nothing was given through us, and based on what was said later, I doubt if anything was passed on [separately] through Gyalo Thondup. Anyway, from our side, no plan was given for the Americans about how we were going to resist the Chinese and from what angle the help should come.[44]

Consequently, at this unique juncture in modern Tibetan history, the two CIA-trained Khambas were left sitting around the Lhasa environs waiting for a response that would never be given.

Phala briefly commented on this in a 1983 interview with several other former officials (which was the only interview he gave in exile), saying that he made the decision on his own, without the knowledge or permission of the Kashag or the Dalai Lama.

> Athar came to Lhasa and gave a lot of problems by requesting an audience with His Holiness. However, because he was involved in a clandestine operation, it was impossible to arrange such an audience, so I deceived him by giving him fake protective string amulets [Tib. sungdö],[45] fried cookies, a Jigje mahe protective talisman,[46] and blessed pills, all purporting to have come from His Holiness directly. I took these measures so that they would not lose hope. They were pleased, believing that the Tibetan government was with them and was doing the best they could. . . .[47]
>
> [My reason for doing this was that] If His Holiness and the Kashag were left blind [to the presence of Lotse and Athar and the U.S. initiative], they would be innocent [if the Chinese found out about them]. If we [he and the other anti-Chinese resist-

---

[43] Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.04; Athar, interview, India, 1995, H.0007.06.

[44] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.01.

[45] These protective amulets were pieces of string knotted in a special way and blessed by a lama.

[46] The Jigje mahe amulet is a small molded clay image of Yamantaka (Tib. Jigje), standing on a buffalo. The amulet, when blessed by the Dalai Lama, is considered to be extremely powerful protection against bullets. In fact, one of the charges that the Chinese levied at the Dalai Lama was that he was giving these Jigje amulets to Khambas as a way of encouraging them to fight against them.

[47] However, as mentioned, they were, in fact, shocked and angry at this response.

> ence elements like the Khambas] were successful in our endeavor [of trying to drive the Chinese out of Tibet], then it would benefit all of Tibet, but should the result be different [unsuccecssful], then only a few persons would suffer [and the Dalai Lama would not be among them].[48]

Regarding the Kashag, Phala's assertion is correct. He had decided years before not to report any of his anti-Chinese activities to them, even though it was the paramount office in the Tibetan government, because he was afraid word of this would leak out to the Chinese if he did so. As a consequence, the kalöns had no inkling that two CIA-trained Khambas had been parachuted into Tibet to meet with Gombo Tashi and Phala to discuss an American offer of assistance.

On the other hand, with respect to the Dalai Lama, despite what Phala said in that Dharamsala interview, he did inform the Dalai Lama about Lotse and Athar's arrival and mission. Athar remembered clearly that when he finally got to meet the Dalai Lama in person in March 1959 at Lhüntse Dzong (when he was accompanying the Dalai Lama to exile in India), the Dalai Lama told him, "When the two of you came to Tibet, I knew about it and could not make connections because of the Chinese so don't be disappointed. From now on we all have the same goal. You should work hard here [in Tibet] and I will go down [to India] and do whatever I could in the world."[49] Consequently, the Dalai Lama must have agreed with the decision that it was too dangerous for him to meet the two American agent-spies in person, let alone to also ask for American assistance to oppose the Chinese. The Dalai Lama must also have approved the decision to offer no reply at all to the American government's overture.

To understand why the Dalai Lama and Phala did not pursue this opportunity to discuss working with the American government, we need to understand the fundamental dillema that the Dalai Lama and Phala faced. First, although ideally they wanted to end Chinese rule in Tibet, at that time, the Dalai Lama's primary strategy was to work with the Chinese under the Seventeen-Point Agreement to maintain the highest degree of internal autonomy possible and protect Tibet's Buddhist institutions and way of life. This is what Nehru had strongly advised, and this made sense, since Tibet at this time was in a very different place than Sichuan had been when its revolt started. In Sichuan, it was the Chinese starting to implement reforms forcibly that led the Khambas to revolt. In Tibet, Mao had learned from his Sichuan mistake, and as was seen in chapter 2, decisively intervened to stop Fan Ming from implementing reforms in Tibet. Consequently, not only was the Dalai Lama's government continuing to administer Tibet internally, but all of Tibet's traditional society was still intact, and the issue of implementing reforms had basically been taken off the table for the foreseeable future. And even though it was understood that reforms had to come at some time, Mao's moves in 1956–57 made it seem possible that the current situation could continue for years to come. Consequently, Phala/Dalai Lama did not want to do anything that would compromise the present arrangement and risk losing the political and religious autonomy they were still able to exercise.

---

[48] Phala, ms., Tibetan transcript of interview, 1983, Information office, Dharamsala, India. This interview was organized by the Tibetan government-in-exile as part of an oral history program to record the recollections of old officials.

[49] Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.05.

However, for Phala, as mentioned above, there was another level to consider. While he was willing to risk his own life and freedom to oppose the Chinese, he was unwilling to do anything that would risk the safety of the Dalai Lama. Consequently, a prerequisite for joining any militant action with the Americans and Chushigandru was that the Dalai Lama had to be safely out of harm's way, that is to say, outside of Tibet. That was precisely why Phala and JKTS were arguing so aggressively in 1956–57 that the Dalai Lama had to stay in India in exile and lead the resistance from there. So long as the Dalai Lama was in Lhasa, Phala's prime concern was to not allow any actions that could endanger the Dalai Lama.

Another less obvious but culturally relevant factor was to avoid doing anything that would affect the Dalai Lama's geshe degree exams, which were to start in the summer of 1958.[50] In Tibetan monastic culture, this was a major milestone, and his tutors were pushing him to study hard to make his exam an impressive success. The Dalai Lama himself said of this, "During that period my main concern was to study—1957, '58, because of the examination, more anxiety. Ha ha (laughs)."[51] And in another interview he explained,

> Personally, I spent most of my time reading the scriptures (Tib. pecha). This was for about two years. After returning from India, I reached Lhasa in the second Tibetan month of 1957 [on 1 April 1957]. So all of 1957, 1958, and [then] in the second month of 1959, I took my examination. So for more than two years I studied the scriptures. Out of thirteen or fourteen years of studying, only for two years (laughs) did I really put a lot of effort into studies. Otherwise, not much was done.
>
> Q: So this must have taken a lot of your time, so from the political side there might have been a sort [unfinished sentence]
>
> A: You mean neglect?
>
> Q: Yes.
>
> A: Neglect. I doubt there was any. You know, the Kashag was meeting all the time [doing its job] and Chemmo [unfinished sentence]
>
> Q: I don't know if neglect is the right word, but sort of less input from the Dalai Lama.

---

[50] The geshe degree in monastic life was the highest academic degree a monk could attain. It involves public debates with learned monks on topics covered in the curriculum and requires the candidate to have memorized vast amounts of written material and debate its content.

[51] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 2004, H.0019.09.

> A: Even if I had more time than that, what was there that I could have done? Nothing really much.[52]

In the religion-dominated world in which the 22-year-old Dalai Lama was ensconced with his monk tutors and monk attendents all the time, making a good impression on his public geshe exam was a serious concern, and religiously, was something that was essential to complete successfully. The Dalai Lama further explained,

> We were hoping that something terrible [such an outbreak of fighting in Lhasa] would not happen. For example, . . . the hope was that my geshe examination could be completed without any problems. Without a hitch. . . . There was nothing one could do for the future [so we were] only trying and hoping that the immediate emergency situation does not explode. So it was something like that.[53]

Consequently, when Phala assessed the potential costs and benefits of saying anything to the Americans, he concluded that it was far too risky to request American support to oppose the Chinese. On the other hand, he wanted the Americans to help Chushigandru, so he didn't want to tell Lotse and Athar to leave at once and tell Washington that the Dalai Lama did not want any involvement from the United States. Therefore, the safest course would be to make no response at all, neither positive nor negative. As strange as this seems, this was not that uncommon in Tibetan society. In Tibet, people typically preferred not to overtly say no to a request and often simply did not answer. For example, if someone wanted to refuse to do something for a person who asked you for something, a culturally typical way to handle that was not to say no to that person directly, but to say something like, "I'll look into this," and then just never reply. So not giving an answer to Lotse and Athar was something that would have been consided not that unusual in Tibetan society.

On the other hand, as in the past, the Dalai Lama and Phala wanted to both cooperate with the Chinese and encourage opposition to Chinese rule. Therefore, despite their refusal to risk a concrete response to the Americans, they were stll covertly continuing to offer support and sympathy for the anti-Chinese resistance forces in Tibet and in India, albeit in ways they felt were less dangerous. In December 1957, for example, in response to a letter that the former Acting Prime Minister Lukhangwa had sent to the Dalai Lama from Kalimpong imploring him to invite Nehru to visit Tibet, the Dalai Lama sent a letter secretly through the Indian Consulate in Lhasa to his brother Gyalo Thondup and JKTS in India. This letter, which was copied into Shakabpa's diary, shows the continuing connection between the Dalai Lama and the anti-Chinese resistance in Kalimpong nine months after the

---

52. Dalai Lama interview, India, 1994, H.0019.03.
53. Ibid.

Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa. In his letter, the Dalai Lama tells Lukhangwa that the situation in Lhasa is volatile, so they [Lukhangwa and JKTS] need to be careful [about how far they go], but also tells them that they need to do their work well and with unity among themselves. Relevant portions of the letter follow:

> Nowadays, unlike earlier, there is a strong militant [atmosphere] (Tib. tragshug che) so it is not definite what bad situation/harm (Tib. gekyen) might happen suddenly. Therefore, the work [in India] must be done carefully, cleverly and methodically. So with regard to this, you [Lukhangwa] think and make the decisions. [This conveys that he should make decisions so as not to make the situation worse in Lhasa].
>
> Regarding the organization [JKTS] and Yuthok [in Kalimpong],[54] I've heard that things are not getting on well. If this happens, then our work will not have strength. So all must be united like the proverb, "No matter whether there will be happiness or suffering, all [people] must work together as one [literally, use the chisel together at one point].[55]

Thus, although maintaining good relations with the Chinese was a priority, so was supporting the anti-Chinese opposition, so the Dalai Lama did not tell JKTS to stop its activities but only to be careful not to do anything too rash that would upset the delicate situation in Lhasa. The Dalai Lama was agreeable to letting these émigrés operate on their own, in essence, to see what they could accomplish—so long as it was assessed that there was no direct risk of blowback to the Dalai Lama and the autonomy of the Tibetan government. The Dalai Lama and Phala wanted the Chinese out of Tibet but did not want to create a situation where Lhasa would become engulfed in the kind of fighting and bloodshed that had occurred in Sichuan/Kham. Yet they also didn't want to end up with only continued Chinese rule and democratic reforms, so he wanted to keep the Khamba/JKTS/American option alive. This, obviously, was a complicated and dangerous game to try to manage and control. And it soon became even more dangerous when Gombo Tashi's Chushigandru decided to leave Lhasa and set up an insurgency military headquarters in Lhoka in south-central Tibet (see map 2).

CHUSHIGANDRU LEAVES LHASA

Gombo Tashi, meanwhile, was thinking that the time was nearing for Chushigandru to move out of Lhasa to a safer venue where they could start to operate openly, and he was being encouraged to do so by Phala, who feared, as mentioned above, that an incident could trigger the start of Khamba-PLA fighting in Lhasa and endanger the life of the Dalai Lama. However, Gombo Tashi wanted more weapons and ammunition before departing. Although most Khambas had their own weapons and he had been telling them to buy good guns and horses, many Khamba and Amdowa monks from the three monastic seats around Lhasa, as well as some others from Amdo, wanted to join Chushigandru but had no weapons of their own. Gombo Tashi also knew that to be successful, he would need to recruit rural Central Tibetans, and these normally did not have their own rifles.

---

[54] This refers to JKTS and the Acting Kalön Yuthok who, as discussed in chapter 3, had been instructed by the Dalai Lama/Kashag to remain in Kalimpong when the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet from India, to act on behalf of the Kashag.

[55] Shakabpa diary, entry for 6 December 1957. In Tibetan: gyidu tsongka jigdri.

An obvious source of such weapons was the Tibetan government's arsenal housed in the Potala Palace. Gombo Tashi wanted Phala to let him quietly take these. Phala refused, fearing the Chinese would find out, so he suggested an alternative—another government arms depot located next to Namling Dzong, southwest of Lhasa (see map 2). These guns were from a regiment of five hundred troops that had been sent to the northern border in 1943 when there was danger of a war with Ma Bufang (the warlord in control of Qinghai Province).[56] Later, when that threat ended, these soldiers were decommissioned, and their full set of weapons was placed under the joint custodianship of Namling Dzong and the adjacent Shang Ganden Chöngor Monastery.[57]

Phala told Gombo Tashi to forget about the weapons in the Potala and instead go to Namling Dzong and take those weapons. Phala said that would be easy, because there were no Tibetan troops guarding those weapons, and he could arrange for the monks to turn over the weapons to him without a fight,[58] although he told Gombo Tashi to make it look like the weapons were taken by force.[59] This was a serious step, since Phala was now helping to arm Chushigandru to rebel against the Chinese. However, from Phala's point of view the risks were warranted, because Shang Ganden Chöngor Monastery was far from Lhasa and had no connection with the Dalai Lama's palace. Consequently, this let Phala help Gombo Tashi's plans for an insurrection without any negative effects in Lhasa, at least in the short run. As in most of Phala's anti-Chinese activities, Phala did this without informing the Kashag, let alone getting their approval.

When the Dalai Lama was asked about whether he knew of this in advance, he did not want to answer clearly, so the author asked him hypothetically about it: If Phala had asked him about this, would he have been in favor of helping them to get guns or would he have thought that would be a bad idea. The Dalai Lama paused for what seemed like a long time while he thought about his answer, and then gave a reply that illuminated his conflicted thinking about how to deal simultaneously with the Chinese and with the Tibetan resistance. He said,

---

[56] During World War II, Tibet and China came to the brink of war when the Tibetan government refused to allow the shipment of military supplies through Tibet. As tensions mounted, in May 1943 the Kashag sent troops to Nagchuka (its northern border) after Ma Bufang, the warlord in control of Qinghai Province, moved a few thousand soldiers close to the Tibet border. For more detail on this incident, see Goldstein 1989, 385–90.

[57] Chape, interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0009.01. Chape was the co-head of Namling Dzong in 1958.

[58] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2002, H.0012.05.

[59] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.09.

> Oh, probably I would have said that that is a very dangerous course of action. My position regarding the whole Chushigandru movement was very, very difficult. One way [in one sense] I fully understood their determination or their loyalty to the Tibetan nation. Their activities are simply an expression of the Tibetan people's feelings. At the same time, their movement is more violent. It has a more violent nature. This posed a great, great risk. So that was my whole attitude when this movement started. At the same time, I found it very difficult to reject it right away. They already had suffered a lot since 1955. And in the whole of 1956 and 1957. Now in 1958 there are many relatives whose whole livelihood was destroyed and then these people escaped from other parts of Tibet, including Amdo. So it is very difficult to reject their movement. (Sighs.) So I don't know. Most probably if they asked me about those weapons at Shang Ganden Chönkor, I would have said this is very risky, *so be very careful.* I think that's my answer.[60]

This comment by the Dalai Lama reveals the basic ambivalence the Dalai Lama had about the current situation and how he should handle it. The Dalai Lama knew he had to maintain cordial relations with the Chinese so that Tibet's internal autonomy would continue, and he had returned to Lhasa from India because of this. But he also understood and wanted to support the goals of Chushigandru and others striving for Tibetan independence, yet didn't want to commit to supporting them fully. The Dalai Lama had spent almost a year in inland China, so he knew firsthand the strength of China and doubted whether a few thousand Khambas on horseback could defeat the PLA. Nevertheless, they were risking their lives to fight for Tibetan Buddhism and freedom, so he didn't want to close the door to them. With American training and weapons, perhaps they might be able to succeed, but he also did not want them to destroy the current autonomy in which monasticism was flourishing as before. The Dalai Lama's government was administering Tibet internally according to its own laws, and reforms were basically off the table. So the Dalai Lama would have been willing to give them the guns at Shang Ganden Chöngor Monastery but would have told them to be "very careful" not to destroy the status quo in Lhasa.

However, while it made sense to tell JKTS in India to be careful about what they do in India, that way of thinking made no sense with respect to Chushigandru. These Khambas were going to use their new weapons to kill Chinese, so telling them they should be very careful was naïve and unrealistic. Once Gombo Tashi set up in Lhoka to rebel against the Chinese, the Chushigandru goal was not to worry about the internal autonomy in Lhasa but to start to attack Chinese convoys and compounds and, eventually, force China out of Tibet and Kham.

---

[60] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.

Gombo Tashi was interested in getting those guns, but since that would require an expedition of hundreds of riders and pack animals and would take several weeks of travel, he asked Phala about the current condition of those weapons, since many years had passed since they had been placed in storage. Phala checked and reported back to him that they were all in good shape, so Gombo Tashi started to organize a party of about five hundred armed Khambas and pack animals to bring the guns back to Lhasa. Then suddenly an event occurred that changed his plans—the arrest and deportation of the so-called Blue Chinese.[61]

In 1957–58, Mao launched a "rectification" campaign against the bureaucracy in the party and state organs that quickly morphed into the massive Anti-Rightist Movement/Campaign (Ch. fan youpai yundong).[62] One of the minor aspects of that rectification campaign in Tibet was the TWC's decision to arrest and expel all private Han Chinese who had made their way to Lhasa and other towns like Shigatse and Gyantse. Sambo, the co-commander of the Trapchi Regiment in Lhasa, recalled of these Chinese:

> There were quite a number of ordinary Chinese who were not connected with the liberation army. They were ordinary Chinese who had come to Lhasa and opened up shops and restaurants, built temples, made shoes, and so on. There were about two hundred to three hundred of them, and they were referred to as the "blue Chinese" (Tib. gyami ngönbo) by the local people since most of them wore blue-colored clothing. Then all of a sudden [on 1 April 1958], the Chinese military administration sent trucks and picked up these Chinese without giving them a chance to pack up or take their belongings with them. They were just plucked out of their shops, houses, or wherever they happened to be, packed into trucks and taken away. This caused a lot of worry among the Khambas—especially those from the other side of the Drichu River area [those from Sichuan]. They dreaded that a similar thing might happen to them, and that they would be herded out of Lhasa one fateful day without warning.[63]

The TWC considered these Chinese a negative force, because they were getting into fights and arguments and competing with the local Tibetans, and thus were undermining Mao's gradualist policy of giving Tibetans control over daily life and of fostering positive interactions with Chinese. An official Chinese source succinctly explained this:

> During the rectification campaign, the TWC decided to check and sort out those Han people who had settled or were staying in cities like Lhasa. In the interest of general security in Tibet, the TWC made the decision that the Han people who are

---

[61] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2002, H.0012.05.

[62] Vidal 2016, 3.

[63] Sambo, interview, India, 1985, H.0205.25.

> in Tibet or who entered Tibet unlawfully were subject to arrest and being sent back to the mainland. Four hundred fifty-six people were arrested in Lhasa, Shigatse, Gyantse, and Yadong and were all sent back to the mainland.[64]

Drakten la, a Tibetan monk official, also recalled the expulsions,

> The Chinese [government] brought vehicles at night and that morning in one fell swoop, herded them all together and kicked them out of Lhasa. The next morning all the stalls were absolutely empty; no people and no things were there except for the stall frames. So since the Chinese were determined and powerful, no matter how many people were there, they had arranged things and had recorded the number of people, and so the next morning [they knew what to do] so not a single Chinese was left. It was like sweeping the floor; not one could be seen.[65]

Gombo Tashi and the other Khambas saw this as a portent of what the Chinese were planning to one day do to them, so Gombo Tashi made moving Chushigandru out of Lhasa before the Chinese acted his new priority. However, moving out of Lhasa without the Chinese knowing would not be easy, because there were several thousand Chushigandru members in Lhasa who were living in rented rooms and in tents on the outskirts of Lhasa. And where would they go? Would the Chinese try to stop them? The first thing Gombo Tashi did was to postpone his expedition to take the weapons from Shang.

EXITING LHASA

Gombo Tashi discussed where to set up a Chushigandru headquarters with other Khamba leaders, as well as with Phala and Tsipön Namseling, the high Tibetan official who was part of Phala's clique and his good friend. Drakten explained,

> Gombo Tashi frequently met with Phala and Namseling. . . . So Gombo Tashi, it seems, was asking both Namseling and mainly Phala, saying, "Kungö, what is the best course of action for the Khambas? What is the best course?" . . . So they thought, "Oh! If they [the Chinese] execute such a plan [to expel the Khambas] then it will be bad and will definitely stir up a disturbance [Tib. trug] in Lhasa, for example, the Chinese might say, 'We went to arrest the Khambas and the Amdowas, but they shot at us [so we fired back].' However, no matter what the reason, the end result would be that Lhasa would be in chaos, so the Dalai Lama's personal safety and the political situation will be mixed up in a war. Then the Tibetan army would have to be sent, and that wouldn't be good at all. So if Lhasa becomes unsettled like that, it would be too much. So they thought and discussed and said that it would probably be better if the Khambas got out of Lhasa. They thought that if the "able-bodied" Khamba men left Lhasa, the women and children would not be sent back [to Sichuan]. . . .

---

[64] *Zhonggong Xizang Dangshi Dashiji (1949–66)*, 1990, entry for 1 April 1958, 75.

[65] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.02.

> Anyway, Andru Dzasa [Gombo Tashi] asked Chemmo and also Namseling, and at first they were discussing back and forth which place they should go out to. Gombo Tashi initially thought that the northern plains (Tib. chang) was a good place, because . . . it was an empty area, and no matter how much they were attacked, they had plenty of places to withdraw to. Also the weather there was such [so cold] that the Chinese would not come easily. And as for food, there were good [domesticated] animals there, and even if they came to very desolate areas of the northern plains where there were no livestock, there was still plenty of wildlife. So there would be no difficulty regarding food if guerrilla warfare was to take place. So that was the first plan. So at first the decision was to go to the northern plains. All this about going to the northern plains was related to me by Amdo Nyingpo, who was in Chushigandru along with Gombo Tashi and others. Then, Kungö Chemmo (Phala) said, "Don't do that. If you go there, you will not be able to make connections with those who are in India. The government's weapons cannot be given, and if we have to get help from a foreign country and you are in the north, there will be problems of flight logistics. So if you can set up somewhere in the south, it would be very good, since airdrops from India would be much easier." So these were the inner discussions of Phala and them and that was the reason why the southern area of Drigutang [in Lhoka] was chosen.[66]

Lhoka was a large and fertile area southeast of Lhasa that Gombo Tashi knew quite well, since he had traveled to many of its districts the previous year on a pilgrimage. And as Phala said, it was appropriate, because not only was it adjacent to India (Arunachal Pradesh) and Bhutan but there were virtually no Chinese forces stationed there. Other than some troops at the Chinese base/headquarters at Tsetang, there were only a few small groups of Chinese in villages doing some investigations and development work.[67] Consequently, Chushigandru would not have to fight to take control of the area, and since there were no motor roads there, it would be difficult for the PLA to move its troops against them once they had set up their headquarters.

Gombo Tashi discussed the urgent need for Chushigandru's fighters to leave Lhasa with the various other Khamba leaders, who in turn discussed this with their own people.

After securing the verbal agreement of the various regional leaders, Gombo Tashi convened a meeting in the chapel room of his house to secure from them an oath of loyalty to Chushigandru as an insurgent organization and to a code of military disipline.[68] Radru Ngawang said this occurred on the eighteenth of the second Tibetan month (6 April 1958),[69] but a Chinese source says that the final oath-taking meeting occurred on 20 April 1958.[70] The 20 April date seems more correct, since it would not have been possible to organize all this in just five days after the Blue Chinese were arrested and deported on 1 April.

---

[66] Ibid.

[67] The few Chinese workers and staff in rural Lhoka moved back to Tsetang after the Khambas arrived.

[68] In Tibetan: a 'brug tshang gi bka' 'gyur lha khang nang dmag langs byed rgyu dang dmag khrims brtsi srung mna' gan bzhag pa (Mda' zur Li thang dbra phrug ngag dbang (Radru Ngawang) 2008, 234).

In his book, Radru Ngawang explained how the oath was signed:

> Everyone went into Gombo Tashi's Kangyur Chapel room and ate rice and drank tea. Then Gombo Tashi asked Chamdo Trungyik Küncho Dorje to read the points in the oath statement [that he had prepared]. After each point, all of us did three prostrations beneath the Kangyur and each placed our seals under this list. Those without a seal made a mark or placed their thumbprint.[71]

According to Radru Ngawang's memory, the oath consisted of seven points:

1. We will completely oppose the Red Chinese who invaded Tibet.
2. We will be willing to sacrifice our lives for Tibet's religious-secular system.
3. We will completely adhere to the orders of the leaders of Chushigandru.
4. Those without horses and guns will immediately buy them and be alert and be ready to go [from Lhasa].
5. At the time of the military campaign (Tib. magdön lengü), whatever kind of fighting occurs, I will fight till the end.
6. In order for whatever work is done to be kept absolutely secret, you must take care and not tell anyone, even your wife.
7. Each person must take this oath and place his seal or thumbprint [on the document].[72]

It is important to note that in addition to the presence of the Khambas at this meeting, as mentioned earlier, two officers from the Tibetan army's Trapchi Regiment were present as "informal" representatives—Kedram (Kelsang Dramdü) and Wangden Tashi. However, when it came time to take the oath, they were asked to leave, as this organization (at this time) was just for Khambas and Amdowas.[73]

Gombo Tashi now turned to discussing the actual departure, but it would be complicated, and more than a month after the Blue Chinese were arrested and expelled, no departure date or exit strategy had been set. Then, on 20 May 1958 [second of the fourth lunar month], Gombo Tashi received a warning from Namseling telling him to be very careful because the Chinese had found out about their group's plans so they all were in danger. Gombo Tashi believed this, but as was his custom whenever he faced an important decision, he consulted his protector deity—

---

[69] Ibid.

[70] Zhonggong Xizang dangshi dashiji bianweihui, 1995, entry for 20 April 1958, 80.

[71] Mda' zur Li thang dbra phrug ngag dbang (Radru Ngawang) 2008, 235.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2002, H.0012.05.

Shungden. On 26 May [eighth of the fourth Tibetan month], Gombo Tashi and seven or eight other Khamba leaders went to consult Damba Lodrö, the medium for Shungden, who lived in the Damba village [located below Drepung]. After the medium went into trance with Shungden, they asked Shungden whether Gombo Tashi and Chushigandru should stay in Lhasa or leave. Shungden replied (gave a prophecy through his medium) that, "It is best to go to the south. I will take responsibility for the life of Andru the Patron [Gombo Tashi] up to 11t June [the twenty-fifth of the fourth month], so you need to make your plans to leave before then. Until that date, I will take responsibility for your life."[74] Gombo Tashi and several thousand Chushigandru Khambas, therefore, had just seventeen days to safely get out of Lhasa. Radru Ngawang, who accompanied Gombo Tashi to the oracle, recalled, "Everyone was shocked to hear this, because we had not planned to implement our plans [to leave] that soon. So we had to expand and improve our plans quickly."[75] At this point, all the Khamba regional leaders were informed, and each in turn quietly prepared to depart in a few weeks when Gombo Tashi was to send them a message to leave.

Gombo Tashi's decision that Chushigandru would leave in a few weeks raised the issue: what should Athar and Lotse do?

ATHAR AND LOTSE LEAVE WITH GOMBO TASHI

Gombo Tashi wanted Athar and Lotse—and their wireless radio—to go with him to Lhoka so he could communicate with the Americans and hopefully secure arms drops from them, but they were reluctant to go, because their instructions were specific: they were to stay in the Lhasa area until they secured an answer from the Dalai Lama/Tibetan government. Athar explained,

> Right after that, we received a message [from Gombo Tashi that said] . . . "The protector deity (Shungden) has given us a prophecy saying that you (Gombo Tashi) must leave [Lhasa] and go to the south, so we have made a firm decision to leave and start militant opposition." We don't know whether or not we will be able to succeed, but there is no way left but for us to start a military campaign [Tib. magdön lengü]. The Tibetan government can't make any moves, so if we don't do something ourselves, then one day we will end up wearing the handcuffs of the Chinese. Therefore, we, Chushigandru, have decided it is best to go, and we are leaving. Consequently, you two should go to ask the Tibetan government whether you should stay in Lhasa or go with us. I will accompany you. The three of us should go and ask the Tibetan government about what you should do." That is what he told us.
>
> We replied, "Since the protector deity (Shungden) has given a prophecy like this, and since you have made up your mind, there is probably no point for the two of us to stay

---

[74] Mda' zur Li thang dbra phrug ngag dbang (Radru Ngawang) 2008, 238–39.

[75] Ibid., 238.

> around here, but [I agree with you about] first talking about this with them [Phala]." So the next day we sent a message to Kelsang Ngawang [Phala's contact person for us], telling him we will come to see him tomorrow. When we met him, Gombo Tashi explained to him that, "We, Chushigandru, have consulted Shungden and, based on his prophecy, we have decided to leave Lhasa and go to Lhoka. There is nothing more to think about, as this has been decided. . . . I can't be of any use if I stay here, and one day all of us are going to end up in Chinese prisons. The Tibetan government's officials and all of us Khambas are going to end up in chains, in prison. . . . So there is no other way out, but to leave. . . . However, those two [Athar and Lotse] were sent primarily to contact the Tibetan government, so if the government has some plans [it is working on] then you should keep them [in the Lhasa area to communicate with Washington]. If not, then it's better that all of you discuss what should be done with them." That's what he told him.
>
> Then we [Athar and Lotse] told him the same thing, i.e., that we were not sent to Kham with the other group, but were sent here specifically to contact the Tibetan government. We were told that the Tibetan government and all the Tibetan people are going to make a move [against the Chinese], so we thought that if the government made a move [we needed to be here], so we have come and have waited until now for a response. However, nothing has arrived. There are no instructions and no plans. Nevertheless, If you tell us you are going to do something, then we have to stay, since we must fulfill the task that we were sent here to do. On the other hand, if there is nothing; if no plans are being made, then it is pointless for us to stay, so the two of us will go with Gombo Tashi.[76]

Phala knew that Gombo Tashi was leaving Lhasa, and was well aware that the issue of Athar and Lotse would arise. For security reasons he badly wanted them out of Lhasa, so had already instructed Kelsang Ngawang to tell them to leave Lhasa with Gombo Tashi. Kelsang, consequently, was able to respond immediately,

> "Oh yes! By all means, go! We are not able to do anything at all . . ., so you must go with Gombo Tashi. This is the final word."
>
> Q. Did he say that right away?
>
> A. Yes. He didn't say that he had to ask somebody. He just said it directly.
>
> Q. Did they know clearly that you guys were going to Lhoka to make war?
>
> A. Of course they knew that. We told them that we are going to fight and rebel against the Chinese.[77]

Athar, however, was still worried about what the American would say later if he simply left, so he asked Kelsang Ngawang to give him a letter saying that it is okay to leave Lhasa. Athar recalled this,

> So I said, "Kungö [Sir], since this is your final order, please give it to us in writing. The Lord Chamberlain Phala instructed us to meet with you, so whatever order you

---

[76] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.02.

[77] Athar, interview, India, 1995, H.0007.06.

> give us, we need to send it in a message to the people who sent us." So we received a written letter saying it was okay to leave Lhasa.[78]

Gombo Tashi also had one final private meeting with Phala to discuss Athar and Lotse. Gombo Tashi told Phala that the CIA had been telling its two Tibetans for a year that they need an answer from the Tibetan government, so they need an answer. Phala told him in return, " I cannot say to you that the government will give an answer, but according to my own opinion, I am personally hoping for the Third World War to break out. Other than that, I can't say anything to you about the views of the Tibetan government—that it would be able to do this or that against the Chinese." Phala also told Gombo Tashi to take good care of Lotse and Athar and use them to do whatever work was needed.[79] Athar elaborated on what Phala said in a comment he made to a Chushigandru leader. The leader recalled: "The Tibetan government told him to request America to fight the Third World War." To that Radru commented, "Probably, they were implying that without that, we couldn't cope with them [the Chinese]."[80]

Given this attitude in Lhasa, Athar and Lotse now sent a message to Washington explaining that they wanted to leave Lhasa and go with Gombo Tashi to his new insurgency headquarters, but first asked Gombo Tashi's opinion regarding what the United States would think if they learned that after waiting all this time for an answer, their agents had received nothing at all and were not going to get an answer even if they waited longer. Athar was hesitant to say clearly that Phala and the Dalai Lama refused to say whether they had plans to oppose the Chinese or that they wanted American assistance. Athar and Lotse feared that if they didn't pull punches and reported frankly, this would produce a bad reaction in America, so they were wondering whether they perhaps should try to convey some hope that the Dalai Lama might still respond positively. Gombo Tashi, however, told them to send the true response of the Tibetan side.[81] Athar said,

> We immediately sent a message to America that said, "We are leaving Lhasa. They (the Dalai Lama/Phala/Tibetan government) have said that they have no plans and have told us to go with Gombo Tashi, so we are going." To this they [the Americans] replied, "Alright. Go ahead. Inform us about the situation in the south and whatever plans or goals you have."[82]

The scene was now set for a massive exodus of between 1,500 and 2,000 armed Khambas right under the eyes of the Chinese. This is the subject of chapter 5.

---

78. Ibid.
79. Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.06.
80. Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.02.
81. Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.06.
82. Athar, interview, India, 1995, H.0007.06.

5

Chushigandru in Lhoka

THE DEPARTURE OF CHUSHIGANDRU FROM LHASA

Planning for roughly 1,500–2,000 armed Khambas to depart Lhasa permanently was tricky. GomboTashi feared that if the Chinese saw almost all the Khamba males leaving Lhasa with guns and pack animals, they might move to intervene and try to arrest them as they had done to the Blue Chinese migrants a few months earlier. To lessen that possibility, he instructed the Khambas to leave in small groups of 50 to 100, using different routes out of town, and to stagger their departures over a period of 10 or 20 days. He assigned Radru Ngawang to stay behind to notify the different regional groups when it was their turn to leave and make sure the schedule was adhered to.

At the same time, Gombo Tashi also wanted to prevent the Chinese from learning their final destination, again because he feared they might try to attack them there before he had time to set up the new base. To prevent this, he did not tell the departing Khambas exactly where they were going. Instead, they were told only that they would be going to Lhoka and would learn the specific final location when they reached one of the ferry sites along the Yarlungtsangpo River, where he would leave them a message.

The site Gombo Tashi had chosen for Chushigandru's headquarters was Drigutang. It was a remote pasture area in Lhoka that was not far from Lhüntse Dzong (see map 3). He had passed through the area when he had gone on a pilgrimage to Tsari and Pemagö in 1956, and he thought it would be ideal, because it had good pastures for the animals and was near to the Indian border. There also were no

PLA garrisons nearby, and no motor roads on which the PLA could quickly reach them. And since it was a nomad area, there were no agricultural fields, so he didn't have to worry about Chushigandru's thousand of horses and pack animals eating or trampling the locals' crops.

Gombo Tashi needed to be the first to leave, but he suspected that the Chinese were monitoring his movements, so he took special precautions. Instead of leaving on horseback in a group with many pack animals like the rest of Chushigandru would, he left alone on his motorcycle in his city clothes. It was then Sagadawa, the holiest (fourth lunar) month of the Tibetan year, so he told people he was going for a day trip to do religious prayer offerings at the Tsecholing Monastery in Trip, which was on the south bank of the Lhasa River. However, he sent his companions with his pack and riding animals in advance to Trip, and several days later crossed the Lhasa River on the new Kuru bridge that the Chinese had built. Many Lhasans did this pilgrimage during Sagadawa, so he thought this would not raise suspicions if he was being followed. Once in Trip, Gombo Tashi knew he would have no problem crossing the mountain passes to the south and proceeding to and crossing the Yarlungtsangpo River, the other side of which was Lhoka.

Crossing the Kuru bridge, however, was a danger spot because, unlike in the rest of Lhasa, the Chinese army had set up guard posts at each end of the bridge that were manned with armed PLA soldiers, and there had actually been two well-known shooting incidents there. Gombo Tashi didn't expect to have any trouble, but just in case, he stationed several "undercover" armed Litang Khambas on each side of the bridge with orders to intervene if the PLA tried to stop him. He was planning to shoot his way out if that became necessary to escape.

Gombo Tashi left early in the morning on 2 June 1958 [the sixteenth of the fourth month] and as he had anticipated had no trouble crossing the bridge to Trip.[1] Once there, he met up with ten or so Litang companions and his transport and riding animals, and after making a religious visit to the monastery, switched to horseback and headed south to Lhoka.

Radru Ngawang remained in Lhasa and orchestrated the departures of the other regional groups. His instructions were to leave only when the last batch had departed. Over the next two weeks, the departure plan proceeded without a hitch, and none of the roughly one thousand five hundred other Khambas who left encountered any trouble from the Chinese. The Khambas were initially surprised at how casual the Chinese were about groups of armed Khambas leaving Lhasa with transport animals day after day, but as this Chinese "non-reaction" became more and more obvious, the departure process gradually shifted from being carefully covert, to casually overt, as Radru Ngawang recalled,

---

1. Mda' zur Li thang dbra phrug ngag dbang (Radru Ngawang) 2008, 244.

> The earlier ones who left went sort of secretly, but later [it turned out that] the Chinese were just letting them leave. . . . In fact, later there [was no secrecy and the] wives and children [of the one's departing] came to see the riders off, bringing them Tibetan beer (chang) and khata scarves. The Khambas who were leaving were telling their wives not to cry and their children not to worry. So later when they left it was done . . . openly.[2]

Radru Ngawang added that in retrospect that was strange, saying "if they had destroyed us as soon as we left, we would not be able to set up the regiment."[3] Of course, Radru and the Khambas did not understand that this was because Mao's Tibet policy at this time was that the PLA should *not* go on the attack, and that dealing with the Khamba "problem" was the responsibility of the Kashag. This view will be examined in more detail in chapter 6.

Leaving together with the Chushigandru Khamba fighters were four buglers from the Trapchi Regiment who had been covertly sent at Gombo Tashi's request,[4] along with a Chinese artillery officer named Jiang Huating, who had defected not long before to the Trapchi Regiment bringing with him his rifle, pistol, and one hundred bullets. Kedram, the Trapchi captain who was involved, explained how this defection came about.

> The daughter of the caretaker of the Lingka Sarpa Park met Jiang Huating [when he had been stationed there]. . . . They asked for permission from their headquarters to get married and this was approved, but around that time, secret meetings took place at which it was said [by other Chinese officials] that Jiang likes Tibetans and it is not good that his wife is Tibetan, so he should be cleaned up. To "clean him up" meant to eliminate him. Somebody informed him about this, so he told his wife that things will not be good if I stay and asked her where would be a good place to hide. She said that she didn't know of any, but she thought that if he went to the Trapchi Regiment, they wouldn't hand him over. She also said that she had a relative there called Lobsang Yönden. So they decided on that plan. . . .
>
> Consequently, one day Jiang Huating said that he wanted to go and see a movie, and he set off with his [army] servant on horseback [to the theater]. The servant had a rifle and he had a pistol. On the way, he told his servant not to come with him because he was going to stay with his wife that night. It probably would have been alright if he had just left it at that, but he asked his servant to give him his rifle and bullets. The servant, therefore, thought that something was not right, so he told the military office. That office then phoned [other units] so when Jiang Huating was riding behind the Potala, he saw a jeep coming his way. And then he saw another jeep coming from from the Trapchi side. There were three jeeps coming from different directions. His horse was well trained, so he and the horse both lay down [hid] in the

[2] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.01.

[3] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2002, H.0012.04.

[4] Skal bzang dgra 'dul (Kelsang Dramdü-Kedram) 2001, 173.

> river. After the jeeps passed each other, he got out of the water and came to our Trapchi Regiment's headquarters/camp. . . . At that time, we had eight sentries and one lieutenant (Tib. shengo) on duty there. It was around 10 P.M. at night when he knocked [at the gate]. I was . . . a captain, so the sentry came and told me that a Chinese man had come and he is doing something like this with his hands and so what should I do. I immediately . . . went to see our Colonel (Tib. rupön) Wangden . . . and said such and such has happened, so what should I do? Colonel Wangden said . . . to bring him in and interrogate him. So we brought him in, closed the gate and told the sentry and the lieutenant that if news of this incident gets out, you will be blamed and we will punish you. Then we took him to the colonel's room. . . . Our bugle master knew Chinese, so we called him in and he translated and told us . . . [the above story and then Jiang said, "Please protect me. . . . However, if you cannot protect me, then don't hand me over to the Chinese—just kill me." . . . Jiang's wife's relative Lobsang Yönden was called in, and he confirmed that this Chinese soldier was indeed his relative's husband. The next day, we sent Lobsang Yönden to the girl's house and he said that it was full of Chinese and that they were searching everything.[5]
>
> Regarding what to do with the defector, the Trapchi officers said they had to consult the deities [Tib. lha] and lamas, so they asked their protector deity Trapchi Lhamo and asked a lama named Gungru Khentrü to do a divination. Both of these said it would be good to keep the Chinese deserter, so they did. This was before they notified their Commander Tashi Bera. When they informed him, he said to do what the deity and the lama prophesied, but he also said that rather than keeping him [in the regiment], it would be better to send him to Gombo Tashi, so the next step was to make contact with Gombo Tashi and move Jiang Huating there. In the meantime, there was a small monastery called Trapchi Gomba located below the regiment's compound in which there was a monk with whom the regiment was very close, so the next night he was taken to the Trapchi Monastery and left there until arrangements were made with Gombo Tashi to take him with them to Lhoka.[6]

In the course of his interrogation, Jiang explained in detail the PLA's artillery positions and firing plans for Lhasa [if war occurred]. He actually made a map of all the military camps, and the number of soldiers, plus the names of the leaders and the number of weapons they had.[7] Commander Tashi Bera told Phala about the Chinese defector and what he had said about the PLA's plans, and he in turn told the Dalai Lama, who recalled,

> During this interlude, the Chinese Lobsang Tashi [this was the Tibetan name given to Jiang by Gombo Tashi] . . . went to Trapchi. There, Lobsang Tashi had said to Commander Tashi Bera . . . that it was possible to challenge the Chinese [in Lhasa]. He said that the Chinese at Lhasa could be handled, but that the most important thing [regarding that] is the artillery division in the south of Lhasa [at Trip]. *It had to*

---

[5] Kedram, interview, India, 1995, H.0041.04.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Kedram, interview, India, 1995, H.0041.01.

> *be destroyed first.* Then the remaining ones could be handled. There would be some difficulties in destroying that artillery division and there will be quite a lot of casualties, but this sacrifice must be made. . . . However, whether he was really saying this on his own, or whether the Chinese had sent him, was the question we had to answer. We would not know that, right? It was very dangerous and difficult to make a judgement about that, right? Chemmo [Phala] himself told me about this. . . . He said, "Just last night or the night before, two Chinese have come to Tashi Bera [actually one]. . . .
>
> So at that time, . . . according to what he was saying, if we had fought, there was some indication that a stand could have been made. So this is what he said. However we could not be sure [about this]. . . . There was no way we could make a judgement. . . . Not only did I not have the courage, but also I did not think it would turn out positive. Anyway, the two Chinese were handed over to Andru Gombo Tashi and they went to the south with him.[8]

However, as will be seen in chapter 14, in 1959 Phala and the Tibetan army did not act on Lobsang Tashi's information, and not surprisingly the artillery regiment at Trip, as he had indicated, devastated the Tibetan defenders in Lhasa.

Radru Ngawang recalled Gombo Tashi's decision,

> When they [the Trapchi Regiment] asked Gombo Tashi if he could look after him, Gombo Tashi consulted the protector deity Shungden, who said that the Chinese soldier will be of help and will not cause any harm, so it is good to keep him. . . . He was a gunnery commander and he knew everything about the preparations that the Chinese had made for war in Lhasa. [In retrospect] He really told us the truth about their preparations and he described accurately the various ways that the Potala, Lhasa, Drepung, Sera, and Norbulinga were to be fired upon. He told us all the [PLA's] plans. He was kept at the Trapchi Goddess's [Tib. lhamo] Temple [until we left].[9]

Radru Ngawang's explanation of how he finally left Lhasa for Lhoka illustrates the overall departure process for all of the Chushigandru fighters,

> After I delivered all the messages, I left Lhasa . . . with about 42 riders from Litang as well as about 30 riders who were with Damba Lodrö's group [from the Tshawarongpa area], and there were also about 20 some riders from Abo Rabgye's group. We were a little more than 100 riders altogether. We went [north] through the Ngachen Power Station [to Phembo] and crossed the shallow part of the river in the Drigung area, and then we went via Ganden Monastery and crossed the Yarlungtsangpo River at the Rong Lukhang ferry site. When we arrived at Rong Lukhang, there was a message waiting telling us to go to Drigutang. At the ferry site, there were some cavalry from

---

8. Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1994, H.0019.03. There was another Chinese soldier who defected to Chushigandru, but not through the Trapchi Regiment. His story will be discussed later.

9. Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.01.

> Derge and Ga Jyekundo who were also going to Drigutang. . . . At that point in time, there were about 1,300–1,400 riders there [in Drigutang]. All were living in tents around the lake (Tib. Drigutso). Athar and Lotse were also there.[10]

THE NEW MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

As discussed in chapter 2, Gombo Tashi understood that the best chance for the Khambas to succeed in fighting the Chinese would be if all the different Khamba subgroups were organized into a single unified force, and before leaving Lhasa, he persuaded the other Khamba leaders in Lhasa to form a new militant organization that would have a single hierarchical military structure with a unified chain of command. However, it was considered impossible to create a Western-style integrated force in which Khambas from different areas would be mixed together into new multiethnic army units. The Khambas' traditional loyalty to local areas and chiefs was too strong, so the fighting batallions were organized by local regions, e.g., there was a Litang regiment and a Derge regiment. However, all of these regiments, in turn, were operationally under the authority of a small number of higher-level commanders of the new Military Headquarters.

As the various Khamba groups arrived in Drigutang, the first task was to compile a list of how many riders had come from each region and which prestigious personages were present in each of these regional groups. On the basis of this census, eighteen regional regiments were formed initially, each of which had between 100 and 150 riders/fighters. Other Khambas areas whose numbers did not warrant a separate regiment were placed in one of these other regiments. Internally, these regiments were numbered using the Tibetan Army's alphabetical numbering system, e.g., the ka regiment, the kha regiment, and so on. The number of regiments varied over time due to new arrivals. Each regiment was headed, as mentioned, by a commander, or magji, who was selected by all the fighters from the region, e.g., all the fighters from Derge selected a commander from Derge. Like army regiments, each battalion had subunits such as companies of one hundred fighters called gyashog, and then smaller units. Moreover, some areas with more riders like Litang, Chantreng, and Batang had two magji. The Litang Regiment, for example, initially had 183 riders and two magji. These eighteen regiments were organized into two higher-level "wings": a "Left Wing" (Tib. yönru) and a "Right Wing" (Tib. yeru), each of which was headed by a general selected by the commanders of the regiments and Gombo Tashi. The generals heading these two wings were called the "right wing general" (Tib. yeru magji) and the "left wing general" (Tib. yönru magji).

---

[10] Radru Ngawang, interview, India. 2002, H.0012.05. This number gradually increased as more Khambas, Amdowas, and monks made their way to Drigutang.

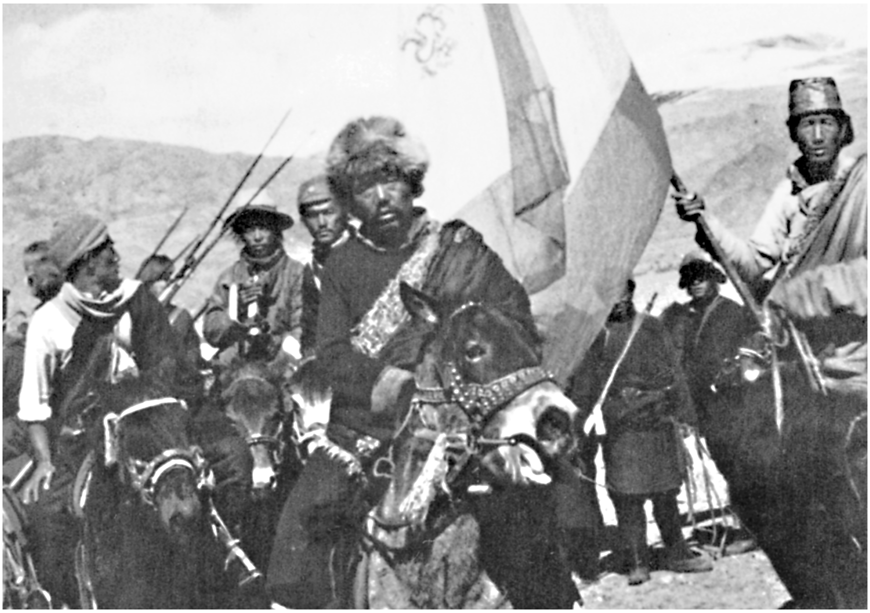


FIGURE 3. Chushigandru fighters, 1959. Courtesy of Photographic Archive, Demton khang Center, Dharamsala.

Gombo Tashi's close associate, the thirty-one-year-old Radru Ngawang, was selected as the general of the right wing regiment and Lomphel Tsültrim from Chantreng was the general of the left wing regiment. Under each of these, there were eight [or nine] regiments. At the head of all the regiments and wings was the supreme commander-in-chief, Gombo Tashi.

The Military Headquarters also established a number of offices to handle non-military issues such as a secretariat, a supply office, and an armory office. The heads of these offices were officials called *tsondzin*, which traditionally was the term for a person who served as a "guardian" for a family or monastery. For example, the families of the new Dalai Lamas were assigned one or two tsondzin from the aristocracy to help them with their transition to life in Lhasa, and some monastic colleges and khamtsen also had aristocratic tsondzin who helped them in their dealings with the government bureaucracy. In Drigutang, these tsondzin were chosen by the commanders from among the better-off, well-respected Khambas who were too old to fight effectively (usually those around fifty to sixty years of age). These individuals were already important regional figures, and most of them had already been participating with Gombo Tashi in the planning stages in Lhasa.

Chushigandru also wrote a Military Code [Tib. magtrim] that included twenty-seven articles dealing with fighting and the treatment of the local Tibetan miser (peasants). And significantly, it also changed its name from Chushigandru, which was a name that referred exclusively to Eastern Tibetans, to the name "Volunteer Defenders of the Faith" (Tib. tanglang tensung magar)," which conveyed that this was now an organization that embraced and encompassed all Tibetans, since this insurgency was now being seen as a movement for all Tibetan areas, not just Eastern Tibet. As we saw earlier, initially, when Gombo Tashi sent the twenty-seven young Litangpas to Kalimpong to seek weapons and training, the idea was for them to return with weapons to fight in their homeland Litang, and secondarily in Kham, but not in Central Tibet. Similarly, when the Chushigandru organization was formally created, Gombo Tashi did not allow Central Tibetans like the military officers who were attending their meetings to sign its oath document and actually told them to leave when it was time for the signing. However, JKTS in India felt strongly that the insurgency needed to involve all of Tibet to be successful, and the CIA agreed. Gombo Tashi now also accepted the argument that it made ideological and practical sense for the coming insurgency to include Central Tibetans as well as Eastern Tibetans, so the new name was created and used. However, despite this new inclusive name, it was still almost entirely a Khamba/Eastern Tibetan force. It was really just Chushigandru operating under a new name. Nevertheless, symbolically, it was the first concrete step toward the creation of a new pan-Tibetan national identity that would flourish in exile after 1959.

On 16 June 1958, after five days of meetings in Drigutang, Chushigandru held a large military celebration that marked the formal opening of their Military Headquarters. Radru Ngawang described it.

> Gombo Tashi gave a speech on the sixteenth of June when we burned incense and announced the names of the tsonzins and military commanders of Chushigangdru. We had prepared very elaborately for the celebration, and the meeting was attended by representatives of Lhoka's dzongs, estates, and monasteries. . . . After Andrug Jinda [Gombo Tashi] gave the speech, the representatives of the monasteries gave speeches.[11]

Chushigandru now had its own military headquarters in a secure location south of the Yarlungtsangbo River. However, for a guerrilla army to be able to fight effectively against a trained and well-equipped enemy such as the PLA, Gombo Tashi knew he would need a source of more and better weapons, and especially a source of ammunition. Consequently, as we saw, one of the first things that Gombo Tashi had done while still in Lhasa was to urge his trader-fighters to use their personal wealth to buy the best weapons and horses and ammunition thay could find in Lhasa for themselves. As a result, the Khambas who came to Lhoka generally arrived armed with a rifle, a pistol, one or two horses, and a few hundred rounds of ammunition. However, since these were private arms, they varied in brand, quality, and effectiveness. In addition, the amount of ammunition each Khamba brought varied a lot. Moreover, although pistols and rifles were available for purchase in Lhasa, one could not buy Bren guns and Sten guns, let alone machine guns, mortars, and other more modern armaments. Some weapons could be secured from the battlefield, but one of the the lessons that had been learned in the Sichuan fighting was that in the heat of battles, ammunition was used up quickly. In addition, a number of monk and lay volunteers from Qinghai had begun to trickle in, but these came mostly without any weapons at all.

---

[11] The preceding section on Chushigandru's military headquarters derives from Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2002 (H.0012.04 and .05) and Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.01.

Gombo Tashi also understood that in the big picure of starting a large-scale insurrection, he had relatively few fighters under his command. At the time of the move to Lhoka, there were only about 1,500–2,000 fighters, and it was not clear then how many more Khambas would be coming from Sichuan, let alone when they would arrive. Consequently, another idea Gombo Tashi had discussed with Phala and Namseling before leaving was the need to raise local militias of rural Tibetans and monks. These, of course, would also require weapons, since Central Tibetan culture was not gun oriented and peasant families in Lhoka did not generally own weapons and know how to shoot. Radru Ngawang commented on this, saying, "We had a great hope for that. If we got arms, we had prepared tens of thousands of [Tibet villager] militiamen in Lhoka. If we had the weapons, they were all volunteers. But what could we do if we didn't have weapons? It would all be useless."[12]

For all these reasons, Gombo Tashi made securing the government's arms cache that Phala had told him about at Shang Ganden Chöngor his main initial priority, since these weapons would fully outfit a regiment of five hundred troops. This would help tremendously in the short run, and in the long run, Gombo Tashi hoped that with the help of Athar and Lotse, the United States would soon start to supply weapons and ammunition.

Gombo Tashi's plan for getting the guns at Shang Ganden Chöngor was straightforward. He would take half of the fighters then in Drigutang, the better half (about seven hundred), and go quickly to Shang, take the guns, and return at once to Lhoka. He thought this could be accomplished within two or three weeks. After that, he would focus on planning an insurgency campaign against the Chinese and start attacks. The key to this plan was to avoid any encounters with the PLA on the way to Shang Ganden Chöngor, so he gave strict orders not to engage any Chinese unless you were directly attacked, and, if any fighters learned of Chinese nearby, they were to avoid them, not attack.

---

[12] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.02.

Gombo Tashi was also worried about security, so he didn't discuss publicly that he was organizing a force to go to seize the weapons, and only a small group of his closest advisors knew this. Not even all the commanders (magji) knew of this. Instead, Gombo Tashi talked publicly of a plan to take half of the fighters on what he called an inspection [Tib. sagor] tour to assess the potential for alternative headquarters in the vast nomadic northern area called the Changtang. In keeping with this, he called this force the "northern army" (Tib. changmag).[13]

Gombo Tashi's plan, however, raised strong objections from his closest colleagues, who disagreed with his decision to personally lead this expedition force; most of his inner circle felt that he should stay at the main base to maintain order. Radru Ngawang, one of that inner circle, recalled,

> We were saying that Gombo Tashi shouldn't go to Shang, but should stay with the main regiment and send us wherever he needs us to go. . . . . But Gombo Tashi was afraid that the soldiers [Khambas] will not behave well toward the peasants along the route unless he was leading (controlling) them. And he also felt that since it was he who had discussed getting guns with Phala, it would be best if he were there to talk with the monks who controlled the arms cache. Gombo Tashi, therefore, insisted that he will go and appointed three [prominent] tsondzin [Jangtsa Chöndze, Jagö Namgyal Dorje, and Amdo Jimpa Gyatso] to be in charge in his absence.[14]

While this was unfolding, Athar and Lotse were sending reports from Drigutang to America telling Langley how many fighters had assembled there and how they were organized.[15] They also sent an urgent request from Gombo Tashi for weapons and ammunition, adding their own recommendation that it be approved. The response they received from Washington was unexpected: Athar should come immediately to Calcutta. He recalled,

> We sent a telegram to America and told them that now we have created the regiment and we are making war against the Chinese, and we requested that they send weapons. But they didn't send any weapons. The Americans told us they [Chushigandru] have to send them (the CIA) their plans for making war [including what they needed], and they wanted me to come carrying the plans.[16]

The real reason for this was that Langley wanted to debrief Athar. Back in Washington, despite the Dalai Lama's rebuff, the Americans were inclined to provide weapons, but needed to reassure themselves that there was really something out there to support. They needed Athar to explain in more detail than he and Lotse had been able to send in their terse communications about what was going on in Tibet and what plans the insurgents had. Consequently, it was deemed necessary to bring him to Calcutta for a debriefing before a decision about arms could be made. Athar, therefore, left at once for India via the Yadong/Sikkim route. On the way, the CIA told him to meet Gyalo Thondup in Darjeeling and then continue on to Calcutta together with him. As mentioned, Athar was also instructed to bring Chushigandru's plans for whatever aid they wanted from the United States. This actually was somewhat problematic, because Gombo Tashi and the other top Khamba leaders had a totally unrealistic understanding of what weapons would be useful, as Athar explained:

---

[13] Abo Rapkye, interview, India, 1992, H.0029. 02.

[14] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.03.

[15] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.02.

[16] Athar, interview, India, 1995, H.0007.06.

> At that time, the two of us [Lotse and Athar] made a plan. [However], Gombo Tashi was telling us that they wanted many things and some big things. I told him that you should not mention such [big] things, but they didn't agree to the plan that we made, so I let them make their own plan. Of course one can't blame Gombo Tashi because he didn't have any military training. He was just a trader. . . .
>
> Q. What do you mean, big things?
>
> A. They said that they wanted Howitzer cannons. But a howitzer actually needed a truck to move it and one Howitzer shell was the weight of one animal load, so how could we carry those things? When I told them we can't use such things, they said that if we didn't have those kinds of weapons, we won't be able to cope with the Chinese. When I explained to them that our soldiers were infantry, so our weapons had to be able to be carried by men or loaded on horses, they insisted that they wanted some big things. So then I told them, "You guys make your own plan and the two of us will make a plan and we can submit them together and they will decide what to do."[17]

Athar said that he and Lotse spent three days writing up a twenty-six-page plan for assistance in weapons, supplies, and training in accordance with the approach to guerrilla insurgency they had been taught by the CIA on Saipan. Gombo Tashi similarly worked out a request for American aid on behalf of Chushigandru, although he didn't tell everyone in the the organization about the U.S. request due to his fear of leaks. So he and five or six close comrades wrote up a plan, and the rest were kept in the dark about this concrete American connection.[18] Athar then took the plans and left for India to meet Gyalo Thondup and the CIA officers as instructed.[19] Lotse was instructed to stay in Lhoka and maintain communications with the CIA, but for security reasons, he was told not to stay with Chushigandru at their headquarters in Drigutang. Athar explained,

> We got an order from America saying, "You should not stay with Gombo Tashi . . . . Nobody should know where you are." . . . If we stayed with the regiment and were

---

[17] Ibid.

[18] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.02.

[19] Athar, interview, India, 1995, H.0007.06.

> killed when the Chinese attacked them, the communication line would be cut. Therefore, the two of us dressed in the poor clothing of an ordinary fighter and, like secret agents, went to stay separately.[20]

Frank Holober, the CIA's Tibet Project desk officer at Langley, explained the CIA's reasons for recalling Athar for a face-to-face debriefing, and for sending him to India conduct the debriefing,

> The guy who was really head of the China desk, Charlie Whitehurst . . . insisted I go out myself. They felt that . . . it required a detailed briefing and they didn't feel that Hoskins [who was onsite at the consulate] could have done as detailed a briefing as was needed. Hoskins was working on Far Eastern Division projects and was kind of seconded into this [Tibet project], so he wasn't up to date on what we were really doing and why we were doing it. I'm glad I went myself. I got a lot of material. Not only what actually happened to those people, but as we wanted to expand the thing, we wanted to know how they could move around once they got inside, how secure they were, all the atmospherics that go into a decent training program. *We thought this was the start of a much larger program. . . .*[21]

Meanwhile, in Drigutang, the day before Gombo Tashi was to depart with his force for Shang Ganden Chöngor, Gombo Tashi summoned Lotse.

> Gombo Tashi sent a servant and told me to come, so I went there and said to him, "I've heard from other people that it has been decided that you are going to Shang Ganden Chöngor to get some weapons." Gombo Tashi was astonished and said "When we talked about that, everyone there took an oath [of silence], but that [obviously] wasn't useful."
>
> Gombo Tashi already had his horse saddled [to leave] and then told me, "I am going right now, so please lend me two of your machine guns [Sten guns].[22]

Lotse had misgivings about Gombo Tashi's plan and told him that taking such a large force was a mistake, as was taking Chushigandru's two Chinese army deserters. Lotse said,

> I am disappointed that you didn't tell me about this earlier. Athar is not here now and I am alone. I think that it would be good to get all the weapons from Shang Ganden Chönkhor, but [it should be done] *gradually, and in a secret manner.* However, since you have already decided to go and have saddled your horse, there is nothing for me to tell you about this. If you just rob [Tib. dor] an armory of the Tibetan Government, how would that be? And also, taking Chinese defectors will create more hardship for us."
>
> [Gombo Tashi said,] "We are taking the two Chinese along with us because they are skilled in reading maps and they are also skilled in firing cannons." I (Lotse)

---

[20] Ibid.

[21] Holober, interview, USA, 1995 (emphasis added).

[22] Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 36.

> answered, "Our organization has not [yet] become stable. If we could make it stable, strong, and good, then we can do it [get the guns] gradually." But Gombo Tashi didn't listen to me at all. So I said, "Your trip now to Shang Ganden Chöngor to get the weapons will be responsible for destroying our organization [in Drigutang]." To which Gombo Tashi said, "Don't worry about me. From now on, I have Alo Dawa as my replacement [in Drigutang]. So whatever you have to talk about, please do it with him." Then he introduced Alo Dawa to me. He also said, "If we can come back fast, it will take just twelve days, and if we are delayed, it will take twenty-one days to come back. In the meantime, you, Lotse, should not stay here but should go to Tsöna [for safety]. And please be on the alert." I told him, "Don't worry about us [here] because the ones who are staying are women, elderly, and children. The Chinese will be watching you, because you are the leader and you have taken all the armed and good people with you. So it is you who should be careful. Then I gave him two of my machine guns [Sten guns], and all of them left.[23]

Concerns about taking two Chinese army deserters to Shang was also conveyed strongly to Gombo Tashi by his inner circle, because they didn't trust the Chinese. The story of the defector Lobsang Tashi was discussed earlier, but there was also a second deserter named Chen Zhuneng (called Tempa Dargye in Tibetan). He was a PLA soldier who was an officer in the security guards for the Henan Warehouse.[24] He had graduated from the Army Infantry Academy in Chongqing and had deserted to Chushigandru because of a sexual relationship with a girl of Tibetan-Nepalese extraction. When he heard he was going to be punished, he ran away with his weapon and defected to Gombo Tashi's rebels. Gombo Tashi believed his story, and as indicated above, wanted to take him.[25] So despite the criticisms, Gombo Tashi would not budge.

Gombo Tashi's insistence on taking the Chinese derserters led to his having to refuse a request by the CIA to send the first defector, Lobsang Tashi, to India for debriefing. Lotse recalled,

> After sending some information [to the CIA], an answer came back saying, "Send the Chinese Lobsang Tashi here and pay his travel expenses." Accordingly, I told Gombo Tashi twice about this, but he said, "I am not going to send him there. He will be useful to me, so I will take him with me." So I sent a wireless message saying that Gombo Tashi doesn't want to send him. I never received any answer.[26]

Gombo Tashi finally left Drigutang on 15 August with about seven hundred riders and perhaps as many as several thousand mules and extra riding horses. This was Chushigandru's first operation, and though Gombo Tashi thought he could accomplish this without the Chinese noticing them, he was sadly mistaken. That story will be examined in chapter 6.

---

[23] Ibid., 36–37.

[24] Ji Youquan, 1993b, 46.

[25] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.03.

[26] Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 34.

Meanwhile, Athar arrived in India and was debriefed by Holober, who had flown to Calcutta specifically for this.

ATHAR'S DEBRIEFING

Athar crossed over to India at Rinchengang, the Chinese check post at Yadong, and then went to Darjeeling to meet Gyalo Thondup. He recalled,

> I handed over the plan made by Gombo Tashi to Gyalo Thondup. He was laughing and he made some changes to the plan. Then Gyalo Thondup called Thubden Nyinji . . . and told him to make the changes in the plan because his Tibetan was good. But still, the plan was not made well. However, the plan we [Athar and Lotse] made was done according to the training that we received.
>
> Q. Did you show your plan to Gyalo Thondup?
>
> A. Yes, but he said, "You don't need to show me this because you are going there and you can submit it to them. However, it would not be okay if I don't make some changes to Gombo Tashi's plan." He then cut out the Howitzers in the plan. How could they bring the Howitzers on the mountains and through the water if they didn't have a truck and a good motorable road?[27]

Then those two went to Calcutta together with Gyalo Thondup's secretary/aide Lhamo Tsering. He had come from Amdo with the Dalai Lama's family and spoke Chinese fluently, so he was going to act as the interpreter, since Holober knew Chinese well. Holober explained how he carried out the debriefing,

> My style in the debriefing was to cover things in enormous detail. Almost a day-by-day chronology of where they went, who did they see, how could they move around, who could they talk to without rousing suspicion. [A few unintelligible words on the tape] it was quite detailed and I don't remember all this. His talking to Phala. [A few unintelligible words] I discovered Lhamo Tsering's spoken and written Chinese was very good, so I spoke in Chinese to him and he asked the questions in Tibetan. It was slow, so later, once he got a flavor of the enormous detail I wanted, he would spend as much time as he needed—four, five, six hours—interviewing him, then he would write down the answers in Chinese. I would only come for a brief meeting [to pick these notes up]. It was not easy. We felt that the Indians were extremely sensitive and were monitoring us, so we made all efforts to keep out of sight; we had to fool them, so I was hiding in the backseat of a car so no one would see me going to the safe house where they were being debriefed. . . . I would pick up several sheets of what Lhamo Tsering had written down and then go back to the consulate and translate them all day. Then if I had questions, when I went back that evening I would fill in gaps that I saw in the translation.

---

[27] Athar, interview, India, 1995, H.0007.06.

> I wrote everything out on these long sheets and left a copy with John Hoskins [the CIA officer in the Calcutta consulate] while I sent the main points by cable. There were two or three pages every day. I brought back the sheets with the idea that I would type the whole thing up with names, etc. Whitehurst, meanwhile, had been replaced, it must have happened immediately, the new guy [a few unintelligible words; he couldn't think of the new person's name] Anyway, I hadn't typed these notes up yet. [Whitehurst's replacement] was reading those informal notes with their translation, and after reading a few pages, he was so engrossed in it I almost had to snatch it out of his hands. I said, wait until I've typed it all up. But I got very busy and never did. So all that we have of that debriefing were the cables I sent. Those yellow pages—I'm really sorry as hell I didn't squirrel away a copy. They would really be invaluable now.—But they might be in some file somewhere, and certainly the cables are part of the record.[28]

Athar's recollections parallel Holober's.

> They asked me to tell them in detail everything from the time I was sent to the time we reached Calcutta. He wrote down all that I had been doing, even the people that I met. He also enquired about all the wireless messages that we had sent. Then he asked us what we thought, and so I told him everything. And when he asked me to comment on the plans, I did. All together, it took about ten to twelve days. We took one day off. He said that after looking at the plans, he thought that ours was better [than Gombo Tashi's] and that probably help could be sought on that basis, but he said he had to consult with [his] government as he could not decide this on his own. He said that he will return in six days and if not then, in eight days. Exactly six days later, he arrived and said, "We have decided to help with all the things in your plan. The Chushigandru plan is a little too elaborate. . . . In the plan Lotse and I made, the arms requested were only those that could be taken on horses and on foot. They said that they will help with all weapons that can be carried on foot.
>
> Then, most importantly, we had drawn up a plan to train 500 persons. Another important request was that from this 500, about 60 people should be trained in wireless communications. We said we needed about 20 groups of wireless operators, each group consisting of 4, or at least 3, persons. Without this, we would not be able to survey the [situation in the] various areas. Then, most importantly, we requested that they train about 400 of us in guerrilla warfare and in using, dismantling, and reassembling the arms. When the Americans drop the arms, we needed people who knew how to handle the items and could teach that to the other fighters. . . . So we said they must take not less than 500 of us [for training]. They [the CIA] were very happy about this and said that this plan was excellent and that we will try to implement it soon.
>
> Before that time, we had sent 16 people [a second group of trainees to Kalimpong] who were were still waiting in Kalimpong, so we said we want you to send them for training. We said we will bring them [recruits] down and send them to you for training. And then every month after that, we will send about 30 to 50 people, as many as

---

28. Holober, interview, USA, 1995. As mentioned earlier, the CIA refuses to release documents from the Tibet Project, including Holober's cables.

> we can send. So they agreed to this and said that gradually they will send all the arms and ammunition. So they agreed to send us all the arms and medical supplies and other supplies that can be used on foot for guerrilla warfare.[29]

Holober, however, did not recall explicitly telling Athar that the United States would send weapons, but he said that, "I'm sure I would have given him a positive answer because we were right in the middle of this whole thing." The other person directly involved, the translator Lhamo Tsering, said that Holober never told Athar that the United States agreed to supply weapons, although he recalled that Holober gave the strong impression that Washington was going to provide them at some point. Lhamo Tsering explained,

> Q. So what did they ask? For example, did Holober say I have such and such questions or did Athar just tell his story?
>
> A. As soon as they came there they started the conversation. [Holober said that] *At first, we had a plan to connect with the [Tibetan] government, but that could not be implemented, so now we are going to work with Chushigandru,* so how is Gombo Tashi? How many troops does he have? If we assist him would it really be helpful? So that's what they asked. So Athar told the story of his coming to Lhoka and that they have so many soldiers, and that Gombo Tashi is a national hero and can be trusted 100 percent. Everybody respects him and whatever he says people will do it. So then Frank asked, "If we help, how should we help?" And he asked about the area and the food supplies, and if we drop things from planes, can they be hid right away or not? And if you can carry it, how far can you carry it? Where is your base? . . .
>
> Q. Regarding these questions, what did Athar reply?
>
> A. At first, he told about Gombo Tashi and Chushigandru. That they had such and such fighters. . . .
>
> Q. What did Athar tell Frank about what Gombo Tashi's goal was?
>
> A. They most probably did not ask about the goals. I do not quite remember. However, Athar said that it was for the sake of Buddhism, politics, and nationality [Tib. tensi mirig]. That it was a militant operation for this sake. It was an armed force against the Chinese. That was our aim. It was not peaceful, and it was to safeguard our nation and religion.
>
> Q. When Athar went to see Phala, Phala said he didn't want a connection [with the United States], so did Frank ask why?
>
> A. Athar said that when he went to see Phala, Phala felt it was difficult to make relations because there were so many Chinese spies around the Dalai Lama, so we couldn't communicate freely. And that if we did communicate, the secret would get out and if that happened, then it would be a disaster. Something like that I remember. So it didn't seem to be a question of the [Tibetan] government not wanting to do it, but there were so many Chinese spies so it was not convenient to make relations and have conversations. So Phala may well have said that it was good for them to leave [Lhasa]. . . .

---

[29] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.02.

Q. Regarding this, did Frank take much interest?

A. What I remember is that he asked about Gombo Tashi and the military organization and if we did assist you, would it be of use to you or not? And if it was helpful, then how many arms would you need? And if Gombo Tashi gives an order, would people obey him or not—is he an effective commander and a leader. Can he give orders to the soldiers? So mostly he asked about these things.

Secondly, he asked about how they were organized and living. Whether they lived in tents or on the mountains, or were living in plains, et cetera. Then he asked how are you going to get your food? How many soldiers can be supported by this local area? One needs food and that comes only from the people, so will the people support the organization? And how many soldiers will they be able to support and for how many years?

Q. So what did Athar say?

A. Athar said this is definitely doable and the people will support them and that everyone supports Gombo Tashi, who is an effective leader. Whatever he orders everyone will believe him and be willing to give up their lives for him. [He said] I have no doubts about these things. . . . They also talked about the base being a place where the arms can be dropped and can be hidden and also that there is abundant food.

Q. At this time, did Gombo Tashi feel that he would be able to win, or did he feel that this was just to make trouble for the Chinese temporarily?

A. He wanted to first come to Lhoka and set up the base and then go to get the government arms from Shang Ganden Chöngor, and then go to Chang (North) to Shotalhosum and Powo to collect soldiers and then to return to Lhoka and hold a large area and then increase its size. So he had a wide-ranging plan. . . .[30] What I recall was Holober first talking about Gombo Tashi and secondly about their living conditions and supplies. Third, if we did assist you, which at this moment we do not have any plans to do, but if we did assist you, then can you keep it a secret and if we did assist you, are you going to go and fight immediately or what are you going to do?

Q. So what did Athar say?

A. Athar said we won't take the arms and fight immediately. Then Frank said, "That's exactly right, because if you did that, it would be useless. He gave many reasons why it would be useless. If you send one or two [fighters] they will send one hundred, and if you send one hundred they will send thousands. Secondly, if the arms are dropped, you should hide them underground among rocks. And doing like this, you should not fight openly but should carry on guerrilla-type warfare. If you are able, then you will fight, but if you are not able, you will run away. So he spoke a lot about this.

Q. What Frank told me was that one should make an organization with cells like the communists did. At first kind of make a network. And then all of a sudden all Tibet should rise up at a certain time.

---

[30] As will be seen in chapter 6, this is incorrect. Gombo Tashi ended up in Shotalhosum because the PLA blocked his return to Lhoka and forced him to flee further and further east until he reached Shotalhosum, where the PLA broke off contact.

> A. Yes, he spoke about setting up a network. But regarding the second point of all rising at once, Frank did not say that. He said, "If you take the arms and fight, it is useless, since you are very few people." So he said do not fight directly. Your job is to engage in guerrilla warfare. Wherever you can fight, you fight, and wherever you cannot, you flee. Attack the weak points and hit them and then run away. Secondly, you all should create networks and make relations with local populations and make a secret organization. That's how you will get your livelihood and get your information. This I remember clearly.
>
> Q. How many times did Frank and Athar meet?
>
> A. We stayed (the two of us) at a hotel for about a week. They used to come at night to collect us. I don't think it was a week—it was for about four or five days.
>
> Q. Then Frank went somewhere?
>
> A. It's possible, but we wouldn't know.
>
> Q. Then after some time he came and delivered a message, is that true?
>
> A. I guess, yes. Anyway, we met continuously for four or five days. What Athar was saying was, are you guys going to help or not? You have to decide. Tell us if you are going to help with arms or not, since I have to go back and give them an answer. This is my aim. The soldiers [fighters] are there, they have a place to stay, they have a leader who is very capable, but what we do not have is arms. So you should help us with that. At first Frank definitely did not agree to this at all. Even up to the time he was leaving, he did not agree to do this. Probably, he thought the secret would leak out, so he said, "I cannot guarantee that we will help, however, if we are able to help, then you have to do like this—hide the arms in various places. Then another thing he said was, "You should not say that these arms are from America, but rather that they are from Taiwan or Japan." So at that time, it did not seem to me that they were really going to help them with full strength.[31]

However, in another interview, Lhamo Tsering repeated Holober's above comments but then added, "So I thought that this is a sign they would help us. Otherwise, it would be useless to say those things, right?"[32] Then he recalled that Frank went on to say,

> In any case, I will recommend this to my superiors. But he never in my opinion said the words clearly they are going to help. He didn't say I will definitely help. He was only saying *if* we did help. But from the tone of his voice, one got the feeling that they were probably going to help . . . but I didn't tell that to Athar. I just told him, "You go back and talk with Gombo Tashi about what he [Holober] has said and then we will contact you directly through the wireless." We talked about three or four days, but they [the United States] didn't decide to help. . . . We just told Athar, "You go ahead and tell Gombo Tashi whatever we had talked about for the four days. But there hasn't been any talk that they are going to help." We also wrote it down and told him to tell Gombo Tashi just as we have written it.

---

[31] Lhamo Tsering, interview, India, 1995, H.0054.04.

[32] Lhamo Tsering, interview, India, 1995, H.0054.06.

> Q. What about Athar's talk of training five hundred Tibetans, one hundred for wireless amd four hundred for guerrilla tactics?
>
> A. No, there was none [no talk about that]. There were no such plans.[33]

So while Holober probably made no explicit promise of supplying arms to Gombo Tashi, the debriefing went well and both Athar and Lhamo Tsering, at the very least, had the impression that the United States was going to help at some level and at some time, and so did Holober. And in fact, as will be discussed in chapter 6, approval must have been almost immediate, because the first CIA arms drop actually took place in Lhoka before Athar even had time to arrive back there.

While in Calcutta, Holober also met with Gyalo Thondup to discuss Chushigandru. Holober said of this,

> In 1957 [*sic*, 1958], I went to India and met with Gyalo Thondup to discuss how to deal with the situation. My advice was not to start an open insurrection, but rather to develop underground cells, i.e., do political education, et cetera. He didn't say much. I said I think we can do this and this in training if you send us the right people for training. I feel that Phala knew and approved of it. We would entertain supporting anything, but we also knew a lot [about insurrections] and *it was clear nothing wonderful was going to happen as a result of this. If we could have used India [to operate from], we could have trained thousands [of Tibetans] and infiltrated them back into Tibet.*[34]
>
> I think that the Chinese just did a good job of tracing down dissidents. . . . And if they lost a few Chinese to snipers once in awhile, who cared. As long as you don't have thirty thousand [fighters] on horseback with rifles. . . . We [the CIA] had the experience of the early attempts [to send Chinese insurgents from Taiwan to] the mainland, but we didn't hurt them [the communists through this] at all. . . .[35] So we thought they [in Tibet] should do things slowly. Get a couple of hundred people in place. Get some training, equipping. Then it has a life of its own. Then it has a momentum of its own. . . .
>
> When I went out to debrief him, I spent an evening with Gyalo Thondup. *My interest was that they should not concentrate on killing Chinese, but on developing an underground organization. I thought they should outwardly cooperate with the Chinese, but at same time find out who your friends are and organize them into cells [like the communists did]. Retrain your people to do that.* My main interest that evening with Gyalo Thondup was what kind of contacts did he have inside Tibet? What influence did he have on them? Can you give them that kind of directions? Can you tell them lay low and organize politically and don't get wiped out? Just survive. If you survive, we can do something with you. If you don't survive, then it's all over. I sort of got assurances from Gyalo that he had very close relations with them, but I don't think he did. They [the Khambas] just wanted to kill the Chinese, and if they went to the happy hunting grounds, that was okay.

---

[33] Lhamo Tsering, interview, India, 1995, H.0054.04.

[34] Holober, interview, USA, 1993.

[35] See Holober 1999.

> Q. Did you think that Gyalo Thondup represented the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government?
>
> A. We did. There is no question in my mind about that.
>
> Q. Why did you think that?
>
> A. Well, from reports from the field. *At that time our idea was that he was like the Dalai Lama's foreign minister.* We felt that if we could persuade the Dalai Lama to become sort of a Buddhist pope from a diplomatic point of view, then he could travel around and sort of bring the foreign Buddhists like the Japanese Buddhists, the Korean Buddhists, the Thai buddhists—not so much under his control, but if they could recognize him to be a prominent figure in the Buddhist world [it would have been helpful]. He would have been in a political role. And from all reports that we had, Gyalo Thondup had a very close relationship with the Dalai Lama and presented himself as such; *he acted like he was his foreign minister when he came down here.*[36]

The debriefing, therefore, was seen as a success in Langley. Athar was able to explain enthusiastically how Chushigandru was a real, functioning insurgent organization with several thousand soldiers that was committed to fighting the Chinese and was led by a strong and respected commander-in-chief who commanded loyalty. So despite the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government's refusal to respond to Washington's request, the CIA was now convinced that there really was something out there to provide support to—i.e., Chushigandru—so they approved the first arms drop right after the debriefing.

However, it is also clear from these interviews that what the CIA was recommending bore no resemblance to what Gombo Tashi and Chushigandru fighters had in mind or what was realistic. They were angry at what the Chinese had done to their homeland in Sichuan and, as Holober suspected, basically just wanted to kill Chinese. Moreover, despite Gyalo Thondup's acting as if he was the Dalai Lama's foreign minister, he was not. He was not even a Tibetan government official, and he had no ability to influence the overall strategy and operational decisions of Gombo Tashi and Chushigandru or the Dalai Lama. Moreover, neither Athar nor Gyalo Thondup had tried to explain to the CIA that the Khambas *could not blend in* with the local populace in Central Tibet when they were not conducting raids, and use that time to slowly set up local secret networks, since they were culturally and linguistically different from the locals. This was not their homeland and they could never blend in with the locals, even if they had wanted to. On the other hand, it is also clear that although the CIA knew clearly that they could not provide Chushigandru the large-scale assistance that would have enabled them to have had a chance to be successful against the PLA, they went ahead anyway, because for the U.S. government, the Tibet venture would be a great success if the

---

[36] Holober, interview, USA, 1995.

Tibetan insurgents could be helped to harass and embarrass the Chinese for as long as possible, even if in the end they would be defeated.

ATHAR'S RETURN TO LHOKA

Athar preferred to parachute back into Tibet, and the Americans would have done that, but Gyalo Thondup told Athar that he had to come to see him in Darjeeling, since he had some things he wanted him to tell Gombo Tashi. Athar, therefore, once again went from Calcutta to Darjeeling, where he came down with a case of stomach worms and stayed for about a week taking medicines. Athar explained what Gyalo wanted,

> When I came from Tibet, there was a Khamba from Litang who used to take photos, so Gyalo Thondup and others told me to teach that Khamba photography when we were going down to Calcutta because we didn't have a photographer and someone who could shoot movie film. The two of us couldn't manage this ourselves, since we had to send wireless messages and do the other work. So we took him with us and we taught him [in Calcutta] and then took him with us when we returned to Darjeeling. When we got to Yadong, we had no passes [permits] from the Chinese, and by this time one needed passes to return to Tibet, since there were Khambas who were going back from India to fight. So we were stopped at Rinchengang, the Chinese check post. We tried to get through, but they wouldn't let us, and when we then said that we were going to return [to India], they wouldn't let us do that either. They said we have to undergo some "education," and they were about to arrest us.
>
> I had a gun in my robe's pouch and so did my companion, so this ended in a shootout. At Kalimpong there was also a person who had been trained as a doctor [medic] for Chushigandru. He was the brother of the photographer. My companion [the photographer] had told him that we were coming to Gangtok, so he was waiting for us there [to go back with us]. Poor guy! He was shot by the Chinese that day, but he knifed the main Chinese checkpoint inspector in his stomach. We killed about four Chinese and one of our companions was killed. . . . Poor guy, he had been sent by Chushigandru to be trained at Kalimpong to give injections and to attend to wounds, and was now returning. Consequently, we couldn't proceed [into Tibet that way] and fled back to India [where Gyalo Thondup helped us]. Gyalo Thondup was friendly with the [Bhutanese] Dasho and Rani [Queen Mother] at Kalimpong, who arranged permits for us to travel through Bhutan [to Tibet].[37]

While this debriefing was transpiring in Calcutta, Gombo Tashi's expeditionary force left Lhoka for Shang Ganden Chöngor. The story of its ambush by the PLA and the ensuing almost two-month succession of battles is examined in chapter 6.

---

[37] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.02. The Bhutanese he contacted were Jigme Dorji and his mother Rani Chuni (Chöying Wangmo) Dorji.

6

Chushigandru and the PLA

The movement of fifteen hundred to two thousand armed Chushigandru fighters to Lhoka to set up a military (insurgency) headquarters in June 1958 was clearly a dramatic escalation of the danger the Khamba refugees from Sichuan represented for the Chinese government. However, as we saw in the last chapter, Mao did not try to stop them as they left. Similarly, after the Khambas reached Lhoka, there were no plans for the PLA to launch an attack on their headquarters, despite the fact that the PLA leaders in Lhasa feared a joint Khamba-Tibetan government attack. Phüntso Wangye, the leading Tibetan cadre in the TWC, recalled such fears in late 1957.

> As more and more armed Khambas poured into Lhasa, rumors arose that they and the Tibetan government were planning to attack the PLA militarily. Many Han cadres became extremely suspicious. Chen Mengyi, the commander of the PLA in Lhasa, for example, one day reported to Zhang Jingwu that the Tibetan government was gathering Tibetans from all parts of Tibet to the vicinity of Lhasa. . . . I knew Chen's main concern was that if the Tibetan government was preparing for war, then the PLA should also prepare for war.[1]

When Phüntso Wangye looked into this, it turned out to be a false rumor, but it reveals that the reason the Chinese did not take action against the Khambas was not because the Chinese were *not worried* about being attacked by them. Rather it was because Mao and the Central Committee had ordered the PLA to utilize a defensive strategy in Tibet. The PLA should not initiate offensive attacks and definitely should not fire the first shot, except under special circustances discussed next. The PLA's main functions in Tibet were to defend the international borders, defend the traffic on the national highway system (mainly the two motor highways between Lhasa and inland China), and defend Chinese offices and installations in Lhasa and other cities and key areas.[2] The PLA's main focus in Lhasa at this time, therefore, was on strengthening the defenses of all of their buildings and compounds, not going on the offense.

---

[1] Goldstein, et al. 2004, 222.

In Mao's Tibet policy, it was the Tibetan government, through its police and army, that was responsible for actively maintaining internal law and order, so it was the Kashag that was responsible for actively dealing with the Sichuan Khamba "refugees." This was conveyed clearly in Beijing's instructions of 14 July 1958.

BEIJING'S 14 JULY INSTRUCTIONS

The news of the Khambas' departure from Lhasa was communicated to the Central Committee by the TWC in two telegrams dated 13 and 18 June 1958. These cables are not available, but the Central Committee's response to them on 14 July is, and it reiterated strongly Beijing's position that it was the responsibility of the Kashag to defuse the Khamba situation, which it blamed on the "ambivalent" or "encouraging" attitude of the Tibetan government. It told the TWC to warn the Kashag and the Dalai Lama that while Beijing was still willing to continue the current system of internal autonomy, there was *a caveat*—should the Khambas launch a rebellion, the PLA would be sent to suppress the rebels and would then implement democratic reforms. In essence, the Sichuan model would be implemented. The Kashag and Dalai Lama were to be told that the choice was theirs: Deal with the Khambas before they are able to launch a rebellion in Tibet, or the PLA will do so. This, as was discussed in earlier chapters, was the "last resort" component of Mao's overall policy for Tibet.

The 14 July 1958 cable to the TWC in Lhasa said:

> [To the] TWC:
>
> The telegrams of June 13th and 18th regarding the possible occurrence of rebellion in Tibet were received. You should inform the Kalöns of our stern attitude and tell them that their encouraging attitude toward both the reactionaries in Tibet and those rebels from the Jiangdong area [the Khamba area in Sichuan] who escaped into Tibet is totally wrong. Due to the encouragement of the Kashag, those reactionaries and rebels feel that they have good support in Tibet, and are *attempting* to launch a rebellion in Tibet to destroy order in Tibet and to drag the Dalai Lama and other leaders to join them. The reactionaries in Tibet have joined together with the rebels of Kalimpong and the rebels from Sichuan (Jiangdong),

---

[2] PLA soldiers were also used extensively in road building and construction projects.

and are using the ambiguous attitude of the Tibetan local government as their cover to get ready for rebellion. If their conspiracy gets carried out, it certainly has to do with the ambiguous attitude, actually the encouraging attitude, of the Tibetan local government.

The Central Committee always has believed that social reforms in Tibetan regions have to be peaceful reforms, and in Tibet, we have decided to postpone the peaceful reforms for several years. However, the reactionaries in Tibet do not want any kind of reforms, i.e., no reforms forever. They will keep the Tibetan people under the exploitation and rule of the feudal system forever. In Sichuan (the Jiangdong area), such reactionaries launched a rebellion even before the reforms started. In southern Gansu and Qinghai provinces, it was the same. In some areas in Chamdo, it was also the same. This proves that they are against reforms.

Furthermore, from information obtained during battles, there is evidence that some of the main leaders of the rebellions are actually agents of imperialists, especially the imperialists of the United States and Taiwan reactionary groups. The purpose of their rebellion is obvious. These reactionaries always use some kind of problems or weak points in the reforms as their excuse to stir [things] up and create rumors. If the leaders of the Tibetan local government believe them and cannot see their hidden reactionary nature, they will be deceived and politically will find themselves in a very dangerous situation.

The policy of the Central Committee is to achieve peaceful liberation. But if the reactionaries want armed rebellion, the Central Committee will firmly crush the armed rebellion and, meanwhile, will assist the Tibetan working people to carry out their struggle of liberating themselves according to their own will [to implement democratic reforms]. We will do this in Sichuan (Jiangdong) and in the areas in Gansu and Qinghai provinces where rebellions are occurring. Consequently, in Tibet, according to the present situation, the armed rebellions of a minority of reactionaries will bring relatively thorough liberation for the majority of working people.

Rebellions are bad, nonglorious things in the history of the Tibetan nation, but the Central Committee's correct way of handling rebellions will change these bad things into good things for the Tibetan people. [BUT] *The Central Committee will not change its decision of postponing the reforms in Tibet and will carry out the policy of peaceful reforms when the reforms come. The realization of such a policy by the Central Government will not only depend on the wishes of the Central Government. More importantly, it will depend on the efforts of the Tibetan local government. We hope that the Tibetan local government will take seriously the responsibility that they are supposed to take.* Look for an opportunity to meet with the Tibetan local government officials and pass the above message to them, and see what they say.

Central Committee
July 14, 1958[3]

---

[3] DPRC, Central Committee cable to TWC, dated 14 July 1958 (emphasis added).

Mao and the Central Committee, therefore, explicitly stated that *the current gradualist policy should maintained,* but the Khambas had to be controlled and that this should be accomplished by the Kashag, that is, as a Tibetan versus Tibetan issue, not as a Chinese versus Tibetan issue.

At the same time that Beijing instructed the TWC to pressure the Tibetan government to take action in Tibet against rebels and reactionaries, Beijing also tried to persuade the GOI to constrain the activities of the anti-Chinese Tibetan émigrés in Kalimpong and Darjeeling.

Zhou Enlai had raised the issue of the political activities of some of the Tibetans in Kalimpong with Nehru when he visited India in 1956–57, but had obtained no satisfaction, because Nehru somewhat disingenuously said he was not aware of that and asked Zhou to provide proof to him that such activities existed. Prime Minister Nehru, of course, knew that his Intelligence Bureau and Foreign Ministry had supportive relations with JKTS (as described in volume 3), but his policy was for those relations to not go so far as to harm Sino-Indian relations.

On 10 July 1958, a few days before the above-mentioned cable to Lhasa, the Chinese Foreign Ministry sent a communiqué to the Indian Embassy in Beijing presenting some "evidence" and requesting that "the Indian Government ban subversive activities in Tibet carried out from India by agents of the U.S. government, Chiang Kai-shek's government, and by Tibetan resistance organizations in Kalimpong.[4] The GOI, once again, did not agree.

Also in 1958, the TWC pressured the Kashag and Dalai Lama to order the leaders of JKTS, who were technically still Tibetan officials, to return to Lhasa. Shakabpa's diary entry for 9 February 1958 said that Shakabpa and Lukhangwa had received an order from the Kashag that bore the seal of the Dalai Lama, instructing them to return to Lhasa. The order said that if they agreed to this, there would be no inquiries and no punishment, but if they did not, from then on they would no longer be considered as part of the Tibetan nation. However, unbeknownst to the Kashag, Phala had already taken steps to undermine that order by secretly sending a message to JKTS via the Indian Consulate in Lhasa, telling JKTS to ignore the Dalai Lama's edict, as it was something the Chinese had pressured him to do and did not reflect his own feelings. Phala's message arrived a few days *before* the actual edict, and was recorded in Shakabpa's diary as follows:

> 5 February 1958: Gyalo Thondup came from Darjeeling and said, "Recently, when I went to Gangtok, the Sikkim political officer said: "Phala went to see the Indian consul general in Lhasa and told him that recently the Chinese requested His Holiness to send a letter to Lukhangwa, Yuthok, Lobsang Samden, and Tsipön Shakabpa asking them to return. Then they requested that the Kashag issue such an order, so

---

[4] Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuan hui and Xizang junqu dangshi ziliao zhenji lingdao xiaozu bian 1995, 125–28 (emphasis added).

> please tell them that *even if His Holiness sends an order/edict, it will be something that would have been sent under Chinese pressure.*[5]

Since the principals in JKTS did not return or stop their activities, the Kashag, under pressure from the Chinese, was compelled to follow through and officially expel these officials from the ranks of Tibetans. Drakten, a monk official, recalled that this was done at one of the daily Trungja tea ceremonies that were attended by all monk officials.[6] Drakten recalled, "At the Trungja, Chemmo [Phala] read an order which stated that since the ones in India did not pay heed to the order to return, they are no longer part of the Tibetan fold."[7]

This incident is a good example of the confusing situation that existed on the Tibetan side. Whereas the Kashag, with the Dalai Lama's approval, was trying to maintain good relations with the Chinese so as to maintain Tibet's internal autonomy and so forth, Phala was operating without the Kashag's knowledge to assist and encourage anti-Chinese activities (so long as they did not threaten the physical safety of the Dalai Lama). And while the Dalai Lama was not informed about every action Phala took, he agreed, as will be seen in the following chapters, that Tibet should employ a dual strategy: overtly cooperating with the Chinese, but also covertly offering some modicum of support and encouragement to the resistance.

Beijing's 14 July message was communicated to the Dalai Lama four days after the TWC received it by Zhang Jingwu and Zhang Guohua. There is no account of their conversation, but a brief entry in a book containing the CCP's chronology of events reported the meeting as follows:

> July 18: Zhang Jingwu and Zhang Guohua met with the Dalai Lama. According to the directions from the Central Committee, they discussed some working problems with him, and then they pointed out that imperialists and the Taiwan reactionary clique have sent spies and have colluded with reactionaries from inside Tibet and from Eastern Tibet to prepare an armed uprising. The Kashag's supportive attitude toward them is totally mistaken and we want the Kashag to correct its attitude with respect to the reactionaries. So every time you [the Dalai Lama] have meetings with the Kashag, tell them about the party's policy and mention the delay of reforms and emphasize the danger of armed rebellion.[8]

---

[5] Shakabpa diary, entries for 2 February and 9 February 1958 (emphasis added).

[6] The Trungja ceremony was the daily meeting of the Tibetan government's monk officials at which tea was provided, but unlike the prayer meetings of monks in monasteries, there was no collective chanting of prayers. The event started at about 9 A.M. and lasted for about an hour. All monk officials in Lhasa were expected to attend, and it was headed by the Lord Chamberlain Phala, who was in charge of the Secretariat.

[7] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.03.

[8] Zhonggong xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengi weiyuanhui, 1990, entry for 18 July 1958.

The Dalai Lama, therefore, was fully informed about the seriousness of the situation and on Beijing's position on the Kashag's attitude. In essence, the Chinese were trying to enlist the Dalai Lama, who they still thought was relatively progressive, to induce the Kashag to take the necessary actions.

In any case, despite the Khambas' provocative move to Lhoka, Beijing's military policy in Tibet remained the same as before their departure. The priority was to enhance their defenses in Lhasa so that they could defeat any Tibetan attack.The PLA's role was not to go on the offensive against the Khambas in Tibet except in certain limited, but revealing, situations. One example of such an exception occurred in April 1958, several months before Chushigandru left for Lhoka. At that time Beijing authorized the PLA stationed in Chamdo to undertake limited offensive actions in their catchment area to interdict Khamba fighters who were fleeing from Sichuan to Lhasa. A Chinese source explained,

> By the end of 1957, about 860 rebels in seven groups reached Chamdo from Yunnan and Sichuan. In 1958 [when the PLA offensive against the rebels in Sichuan expanded], more than 3,000 armed rebels got to Chamdo from neighboring provinces, and the total number of rebels there reached 7,350.
>
> In order to stop these Khamba rebels [in Yunnan and Sichuan] from fleeing to Tibet, the Chamdo Garrison Headquarters put together a force that consisted of one company plus one platoon from the 158th Regiment, and one company of the 153rd Regiment, with two companies of the 157th Regiment. On 9 April 1958, under Liu Guangtong, the commander of the 158th Regiment, that regiment went on the offensive. Their attack spanned eighteen days, but because they had too few soldiers and didn't get correct information about the rebels, and also because they failed to take proper measures to attack the leaders and key members of the rebels, they were only able to disable [Ch. jianmie] a little more than one hundred of the enemy, while most of the armed rebels were able to escape in the direction of Luolong dzong [Lhorong Dzong] so the campaign could not continue. These rebels later reached Lhasa. . . .[9]

A second limited PLA action was authorized on 28 July 1958 in Central Tibet by the Central Military Committee after the Khambas had moved to Lhoka. Its goal was to keep the Sichuan-Lhasa motor road open by clearing out some Khambas who were raiding Chinese convoys and road repair stations on that "national" highway.

> [We] agree with your suggestion to adopt military actions against the armed rebel forces along the Lhasa-Linzhi [Nyindri] road. When carrying out this military operation, [you] must have a good grasp of the actual situation, be secretive and quick in action, and be well-prepared *in order to guarantee the elimination of the majority of the enemy force in just one strike. If this is not possible, and if [it looks*

---

[9] Ji Youquan(1993a, 42).

> *like] the battle may drag on, then do not make a move.* Hope [you] will follow this instruction.[10]

The PLA's operating rules in Tibet, therefore, held that even along the "national" highway, they should attack the Khambas only when they were sure they could defeat them "*in just one strike,*" that is, they were instructed clearly *not* to start any lengthy offensive campaigns against them. This second offensive action began on 2 August 1958 and ended on 17 August, when Chinese sources say the Khambas fled from the highway area. As per their instructions, the PLA did not try to pursue them further.[11]

A more substantial exception to this defensive priority occurred when the PLA in Lhasa received news that Gombo Tashi's large expedition was enroute to seize the large weapons cache in Shang Ganden Chöngor. This represented a serious threat, so the PLA in Lhasa launched a major offensive operation to interdict and destroy them—but not the main base in Lhoka.

THE SHANG GANDEN CHÖNGOR–NYEMO BATTLES

While Litang Athar was enroute to Calcutta to be debriefed, Gombo Tashi's situation changed markedly. As mentioned in chapter 5, he had left Drigutang with about seven hundred riders to seize the Tibetan government's weapons cache at Shang Ganden Chöngor, planning to go and return as quickly as possible so he could resume command of the new military headquarters. This expedition, therefore, was not part of the insurgency per se, but a precursor to it, so he instructed all his commanders to use evasive means to avoid a fight if they encountered Chinese.[12] Gombo Tashi, however, was about to learn that it was far easier to operate a trading business than lead a rebel army.

Gombo Tashi's force traveled along the east side of Lake Yamdro, and after crossing the 15,484-foot (4,720 m) Gambala Pass separating the two major provinces of Tsang and Ü, descended to the south bank of the Yarlungtsangpo River. Along the way, they ran into some other Khambas who joined them, increasing this force to about nine hundred cavalry, so Gombo Tashi split his force into two regiments. The first, led by Gombo Tashi, would be going a day or so ahead of the other.

---

[10] "The Central Military Committee's Opinion and Approval to Solve the Armed Rebel Forces along Lhasa-Linzhi road, 28 July 1958," cited in Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuan hui et al. 1995, 66.

[11] Ibid.

[12] A Chinese source cites the date of his departure as 15 August. I have no reason to assume that is not correct. Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 15 August 1958, 78.

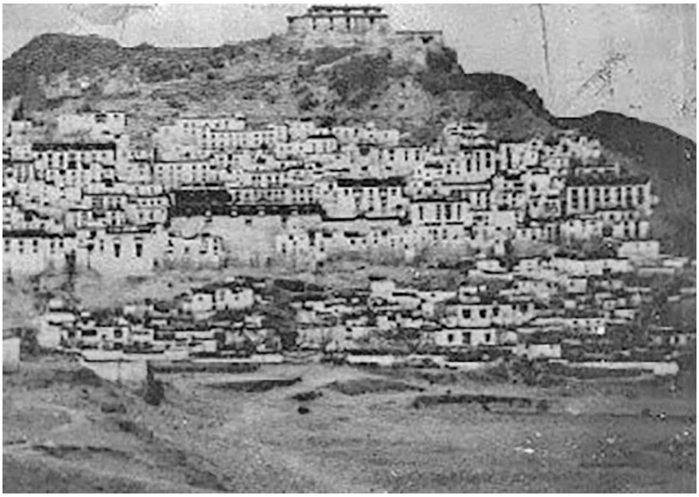


FIGURE 4. Shang Ganden Chöngor Monastery and Namling Dzong. Courtesy of Photographic Archive, Demton khang Center.

On 20 August, they crossed the Yarlungtsangpo River and started to move on to Nyemo Dokarsumdo, from where they planned to continue west to Wuyuk Dzomtang (in Tsang) and then to Shang Ganden Chöngor Monastery, which was located just beside Namling Dzong (figure 4, map 2).[13] This plan, however, went awry almost immediately, because Gombo Tashi rode into a major PLA ambush at Dokarsumdo that not only changed all of his plans but in a real sense changed the future of the Chushigandru insurgency.

The ambush was the result of the flight of one of the Chinese army defectors. Gombo Tashi's inner circle had tried unsuccessfully to persuade him not to take the two Chinese since it was hard to know how trustworthy they were, but as was seen, he wouldn't listen. Now when they reached the Yarlungtsangpo River, he paid the price for this, as Chen Zhuneng (Tempa Dargye) walked off to urinate and never came back. The other Khambas didn't realize he was missing until later that evening, but by then he was gone.[14] No one at the time knew exactly why he had fled or where he fled to, but one of the Khambas who was there conjectured that "He probably changed his mind because he thought that these guys will not be able to fight the Chinese. So he slipped away."[15] This Khamba added, "We tried to give chase, but it was all in vain."[16] Gombo Tashi was worried but still ordered his force to continue to ride on toward Nyemo.

---

[13] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2003, H.0012.08.

[14] Jama Ngagdrug, interview, India, 2003, H.0229.01.

[15] Jama Ngagdrug, interview, India, 2003, H.0229.01; Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.03.

Chen Zhuneng did rush straight back to his old unit (the Henan Warehouse) in Lhasa and informed his leader and Deng Shaodong, the deputy commander of the Military Headquarters, about Gombo Tashi's cavalry force.[17] The news that Gombo Tashi was leading a large force of 700–900 armed cavalry to seize a weapons cache was unexpected. Deng and his senior officers, who happened to be in the midst of a cadre meeting of the Party Committee of the Military Headquarters, stopped the meeting immediately and decided that they could not allow Gombo Tashi to take the arsenal and return to Lhoka. They also thought this was a great opportunity to destroy Gombo Tashi and a large contingent of his troops. Going on the offensive here was justified due to the guns involved and also because it would be a one-time attack that they were confident they would win, since they were far better trained and armed than the Khambas and had the element of surprise. They felt that they would be able to crush Gombo Tashi before he knew what was happening, and by doing so, inflict a devasting blow to his insurgency before it even got started. So Deng and his officers immediately made a plan to deploy several PLA units to launch a pincer-type attack to trap and destroy Gombo Tashi and his regiment.

Despite this optimism, the PLA's situation in Lhasa at that time was not as robust as is generally thought. The changes implemented during Mao's "Great Contraction" in 1957 had markedly reduced the number of Chinese troops, workers, and officers in Tibet. Several PLA divisions had been eliminated or reassigned to the Chengdu Military Headquarters, and the number of PLA troops in all of Tibet had decreased from about 50,000 to about 18,000. And in Lhasa, there were only several thousand PLA troops.[18] Moreover, at that time, the TWC was also deeply engrossed internally in the bitter Anti-Rightist Campaign that will be discussed in chapter 7.[19] On top of all that, there was a serious morale problem among the Chinese army troops and cadres due to poor living conditions. The extent of this was detailed in a frank report sent to the Central Military Commission in Beijing on 20 February 1957. This report, titled, "A Report on Several Problems within the Tibet Military Region," consisted of two parts, the first of which listed six problems:

---

[16] Jama Ngagdrug, interview, India, 2003, H.0229.03.

[17] Ji Youquan 1993b, 40–41. The other Chinese PLA deserter stayed with Gombo Tashi and fought courageously, ending up as a refugee in India, where he was sent to the Tibetan resettlement camp called Bylekuppe in Karnataka and lived there with his wife as a farmer.

[18] Ji Youquan 1993, 41. A previously cited document said the total number had been reduced to 13,000.

[19] See Goldstein 2014, 445–66, for a detailed examination of the Great Contraction.

1. *There is a problem due to the shortage of barracks.* Almost seven years after PLA entered Tibet, there are still lots of people from some army units and other PLA organizations who do not have barracks to live in. For example, all the troops of the 153rd Regiment, the 156th Regiment, the 158th Regiment, the 162nd Regiment, the Cavalry Regiment, as well as from other PLA organizations, do not have barracks to live in. Even when the relatives of PLA officers come to visit or come to get married, sometimes there are not only insufficient barracks for them to live in, but there are not even enough tents. For example, once in the Second Hotel of Tibet Military Region, several newly married couples had to live together in one room and there was even not even a screen to divide the space of that room. Because there are not enough barracks for the officers and soldiers of the PLA to live in, one driver of the Nagchu Military Station had to live in a tent with his wife and their two children (one child was two years old, and the other one was only several months old). Because the climate in Tibet is so cold, their two children both got sick, so the couple had to take their children to the hospital. And more than thirty relatives of officers and soldiers of the 160th Regiment had to live in tents. However, when a strong wind came, it destroyed all but three of their tents. Because the air is so thin and the climate is so cold in Tibet, the infant mortality rate is high. According to the statistical data recorded by the Logistics Department of the Tibet Military Region, during the period between mid November of 1956 and mid December of 1956, four babies died. With regard to the people who do not even have tents to live in, they have to move frequently, or sometimes even have to sleep in the open air.

2. *For a long time now, the officers of the PLA have had no family lives,* because they are stationed in areas where most of the residents are from ethnic minorities, and also because there are no female soldiers in the PLA troops stationed in Tibet. And now most of the officers of the PLA have to face the problem that it is very difficult for them to find proper females to marry. And for some cadres who are relatively older, it is even more difficult for them to get married.

And also, even though some cadres have already gotten married, they still have to face the problem that their family members and their children cannot have a satisfactory living environment in Tibet. Because their babies cannot adapt to the highland climate, and since there is no nursery at the Tibet Military Region Headquarters, the cadres' children have to be sent back to the inland provinces to be raised by others. Also, because the bodies of some cadres' spouses could not adapt to the climate in Tibet, they had to live in the inland provinces, thousands of miles away from Tibet. All these [factors] have led to a situation in which husbands and their wives have had to live separately, and that mothers and their children have had to live separately. This situation is exerting negative influence on the emotions of the cadres in Tibet.

In addition, because at this moment the transportation system in Tibet is about the poorest in China, if a soldier in Tibet wants to mail a letter from Tibet to Sichuan Province and then receive a letter in reply, it will take at least 50 days, or even more than two months. As a result, once a cadre's children or his wife get sick, he will worry a lot.

3. *There are some problems regarding salaries.* On the surface, the officers' salaries have increased. The salary of lieutenants [Ch. weiji junguan] has increased by 108%,

and that of colonels [Ch. xiaoji junguan] has increased by 70%, but in reality, since the goods and materials sold in shops in Tibet now are much more expensive than those sold in inland provinces, the officers' actual lives do not improve. For example, the price of a bread sold at Lhasa is 222% higher than that at Chengdu, and the price of noodles is 250% higher per catty.[20] Orange wine is 190% higher per catty, cakes and cookies 211% higher per catty, sugar 185% higher per catty, and candy is 120% higher per catty. This situation has made the PLA soldiers and officers stationed in Tibet suffer a lot in their daily lives.

4. *The health condition of the PLA officers in Tibet is not good.* In the past several years, the PLA troops have been carrying out the tasks of building and producing all the time, and because they are working in a highland area where the air is very thin and the food supply is not satisfactory, many cadres are suffering from malnutrition. According to the physical examination done in the spring of 1956, of the thirty-seven PLA officers whose military rank was at least major, only twelve of them (32%) were healthy, while twenty-five (67.6%) of them were suffering from all kinds of illnesses. Among those thirty-seven people, 38% are suffering from illnesses but still could work, while 10.8% needed to take a rest, and 19% needed to go to the hospital to receive medical care.

Among the 2,803 PLA officers [throughout Tibet] whose rank is from second lieutenant to captain, 37.8% of them are healthy and 62.2% of them are suffering from illnesses. Of those who are suffering from illness, 45.3% still can work, while 3.1% needed to have a rest and 8.8% needed to go to the hospital to receive medical care. Many officers are suffering from intestinal diseases, malnutrition, pulmonary tuberculosis, cardiomegaly, and others. More and more people are suffering from illnesses because the natural environment in Tibet is very tough and the food supply for the PLA troops in Tibet is not good.

From 1951 to 1956, about three thousand cadres left Tibet and returned to the inland provinces because their bodies could not adapt to the natural environment of Tibet. Even the cadres who are still staying and working in Tibet are not very healthy.

5. In order to maintain order in the market and in finances, the CCP government sets limits on cash distributions (now it is 20%, and later on it will be 10% [of salary]). Yet in fact this policy is obstructing the cadres from buying goods and materials in the market. Because the supply of commodities in the market in Tibet is limited, it is difficult to buy even some necessities of life. And even though [only] a small amount of necessities of life are being sold in the market, it will take lots of time to buy them. For example, it will take a whole morning to get a haircut or to take a bath; it will take 2 days to finish a remittance. Besides those, the time wasted in private matters when buying goods and materials is even more. All of these can affect working efficiency.

6. Entertainment in Tibet is very scarce. Except for not-very-frequent activities of watching movies, for the people working in Tibet, there are no other options for entertainment. Even watching a movie can be a luxury for the people from the teams and stations located in the border areas. And the movies that can be watched in Tibet

---

[20] One catty equals 1.33 pounds.

> are only very old movies, and there are few new movies. For example, some soldiers working in the border stations once complained that: "the only movie we can watch is *The White-Haired Girl* [Ch. bai mao nu]. That is to say, the entertainment life in Tibet is very limited. As a result, the cadres often complain saying, "for us, life on weekends is even more boring than that on workdays!" since on weekends there is really nothing to do for fun.
>
> Because all of the problems mentioned above have not been solved properly, the morale of the cadres is damaged. . . .[21]

The Chinese side in Tibet, therefore, not only was now at reduced strength, but also had internal morale problems. And to make matters worse, they had been mainly doing farm production and constructing roads and buildings, so their military training and preparations were limited and were focused on defending their buildings and compounds in Lhasa, not training to fight in open country against a highly mobile cavalry force. Despite all this, the Chinese leaders in Lhasa were confident they could successfully ambush and destroy Gombo Tashi's army.

THE PLA'S NYEMO CAMPAIGN

Deng Shaodong must have contacted Beijing for permission to send the PLA to attack Gombo Tashi, but we do not have any record of the communications between Lhasa and Beijing about this. In any case, although the defector did not know Gombo Tashi's final destination for sure, based on the geography and and the fact that their target was a Tibetan government arsenal, there were very few of these, so they would have learned from sympathetic Tibetan officials that they must be going to Shang Ganden Chöngor and concluded that they would have to go via Nyemo [Ch. Nimu] Dzong. Deng, consequently, believed that if his troops could get to Nyemo before Gombo Tashi, the PLA would be able to set up a devastating ambush.

One of the PLA units in the attack force was led by Guo Zixian, the commander of the 159th Regiment. It left Lhasa and went south to Nyemo via Chushul, where it arrived on the morning of 28 August. Guo divided his troops into three groups and moved northwest to set up an ambush at Nyemo's Dokarsumdo crossroads. At the same time, the 155th Regiment led by Qiao Xueting rushed north from Lhasa to Yangbajen and then came southwards via the Shugula Pass, with the intent of attacking Gombo Tashi's force from the north.[22]

---

[21] Cited in Jiangbian Jiacuo (Jambey Gyatso) 2004, 184–89. This document was signed by the Political Department, the Logistics Department, the Cadres Department, and the Financial Department of the Tibet Military Region, on 20 February 1957.

[22] Ji Youquan 1993, 46.

The PLA's plans however, did not work out as intended and as will be seen, they were not able to defeat the Khambas decisively at Nyemo. Consequently, rather than a quick, thorough victory, the fighting continued off and on for the rest of August, September, and part of October. Examining the many battles in detail over this three-month period is difficult, because there were multiple skirmishes over two- to three-day periods. Also, the accounts of the Khamba participants often differed in the details, because the nature of the fighting was that some Khambas would be engaged on a hilltop, while others would be in an adjacent valley or on a different side of a river or mountain pass. Nevertheless, an abbreviated overview of what turned out to be a long, but very important, campaign is presented next.

As Chushigandru's fighters crossed the Yarlungtsangbo River and moved toward Nyemo, they utilized a battle organization that consisted of an advance unit (Tib. ngöndro) of about one hundred cavalry under one or two commanders. This was followed by the main force, broken down into regiments as well as smaller units of fifty, twenty-five, and so forth. These were followed by a rear guard unit of one hundred or so fighters called jedey ("the ones who stay at the back"), whose task was to defend against Chinese troops coming up from the rear. Chushigandru had no electronic communications capabilities, so once any fighting started, units were to a large extent on their own, although for major issues, messengers were sent on horseback to the main group where Gombo Tashi was located. Radru Ngawang, one of the two Right Wing commanders under Gombo Tashi, explained some of how the advance units operated:

> If they encountered the enemy [face-to-face], they had to fight, but if they heard that the enemy was somewhere ahead, like in Dokarsumdo, then the commander [of the advanced unit] would have to think about attacking or defending the place [where he was]. When he couldn't make a decision, he would ask Andru Jinda [Gombo Tashi]. . . . They had to send a messenger . . . from the advance troop to the next group of a hundred or so. Then the next group would send a messenger to the next, and like that it would finally reach the [expedition's] main Headquarters. . . . However, [sending a messenger like] this was only done sometimes.[23]

Normally, therefore, instructions and troop assignments were made for the overall battle strategy, and units like the advance force then decided what to do by themselves, which is what basically happened in the first Nyemo ambush.[24]

The Khambas' advance force was led by Lonphel Tsültrim, a commander from Chantreng who was also one of the two Left Wing commanders. As his unit was moving toward Dokarsumdo, they came upon two nomad women and asked them whether there were any Chinese troops ahead. The women told them they could not get through this way since five hundred Chinese soldiers had arrived several days ago and were waiting for them. They also said that many trucks had also arrived, so they should not go this way.[25] Soon after this, the advance unit encountered three older male nomads who told them the opposite—that they hadn't seen any Chinese at all in this area. Radru Ngawang explained the ensuing discussion.

---

[23] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2002, H.0012.05.

[24] Ibid.

> Some of the fighters felt that the two women were spies who had been sent to make us turn back. Others, the older ones, said that it is better to discuss this with the main headquarters [Gombo Tashi] and that we should be cautious. Some of our show-offish fighters said that we have come to fight with the Chinese, so there is nothing to be afraid of if there are Chinese there. Then Commander Lonphel Tsültrim said that according to Andru Jinda's (Gombo Tashi's) orders, until our task is accomplished, we should not make war with the Chinese, but should try to go around them, since our main duty is to get the guns from Ganden Chöngor. However, the fighters under Lonphel Tsültrim were boasting and saying that if there are Chinese ahead we should engage them; this is nothing that we have to ask Andru Jinda about. Finally since his fighters told him that we have made up our mind to fight with the Chinese if they are really there, Lomphel said if we are afraid of the Chinese, we would not be here, so let's go ahead.[26]

That turned out to be a costly mistake, because the nomad women were telling the truth. The PLA had set up an elaborate ambush that consisted of nine ambush sites going from the lower to the upper part of the valley they were entering. The PLA's plan was to let the Khambas ride up the valley until they reached the ninth ambush site, at which time a cannon would be fired to signal that all their troops should open fire simultaneously at the Khambas. Radru Ngawang, who was actually on the other side of the river then, nevertheless explained the ambush,

> The Amdowa fighters started up (the valley) and then dismounted and sent one or two people ahead as scouts. At that point, Lonphel Tsültrim arrived . . . and was told by the Amdowas that they had sent some people (on foot) to scout the area, so you should wait here until they come back. Lonphel Tsültrim disagreed and replied, "When I told you that you should be careful, you guys were the ones saying that we should fight and charge forward. Now why are you holding back like the proverb, 'Holding back the horse when you get to the riverbank.'[27] We should go on now." This was around 29 August 1958.
>
> So they started to move up the valley, but didn't see the PLA troops until they came to the third ambush site, where someone spotted telephone wires in an animal corral which meant there were Chinese there. He yelled back that there are Chinese

---

[25] Jama Ngagdrug, interview, India, 2003, H.0229.01.

[26] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.06.

[27] In Tibetan: chu khar slebs dus rta 'then.

> here. . . . As soon as this occurred, the PLA immediately opened fire. Of the twenty-four riders who had reached the third ambush site when the Chinese opened fire, only four managed to ride away. The other twenty had to dismount and fight. At the first and second ambush sites, the fighting also started and continued all that day and night from about 8 in the morning till the next day. The Chinese forces were moving down from the higher ambush sites all day, but after it became dark, they were not able to come down [lower in the valley] and we were not able to go up. The next day, we withdrew [to the north] taking a different route [than planned]. . . .[28] So at the first fight at Dokarsumdo, we really fought like wolves attacking sheep. We shot at them and fought hand to hand with swords.[29]

This was a long and fierce battle with high casualties on both sides. Radru Ngawang said that probably a total of about 200–300 Chinese were killed or wounded, while the Khambas lost 3 of their commanders together with 49 fighters killed and about 60–70 wounded.[30] For Chushigandru, this represented casualties of about 15–20 percent of the Khambas' expedition force (140/700–900).

The PLA's ambush, therefore, not only inflicted heavy casualties on the Khambas, but also forced Gombo Tashi to to use the mobility of his mounted fighters to change his planned route to the monastery and evade the PLA. As the Khambas fled, the wounded Khambas were attended to as best they could, with the dead thrown into the river when possible and left on the field of battle when not. The PLA launched another smaller ambush, but there were no casualties and the Khambas successfully arrived at Shang Ganden Chöngor on 5 September 1958.[31]

This first major battle between the PLA, therefore, revealed that while the Khambas could fight well and inflict heavy casulaties on the Chinese, they were not able to compete face-to-face with the PLA for extended periods, although their mobility usually allowed them to extricate themselves from the site when they were losing the battle. But clearly, they could not sustain many battles like this where they took such heavy casualities. Consequently, the Dokarsumdo battle was not a good beginning for the Chushigandru insurgency.

The battle also reveals the weakness of the PLA. The PLA had better communications, heavier weapons (such as machine guns, mortars, and artillery), as well as more troops, but they could not contain and destroy the Khambas, who were able to slip away and still reach their destination. Given that the Central Committee's instructions were for the PLA to attack only if they were sure to win a quick and decisive victory, it is not surprising that Chinese accounts of this encounter were negative. One brief Chinese account said,

---

[28] In another interview he said that they fought for three days and nights and left on the fourth day.

[29] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.01 and .03.

[30] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1993, H.0012.03. Radru Ngawang in another interview said there were 132 casualties. Gombo Tashi estimated 200 Chinese were killed and an unknown number were wounded, while the Khambas lost 40 dead and 68 wounded, as well as about 50 horses and mules. (Gompo Tashi Andrugtsang 1973, 73). The Chushigandru organization's history states 55 commanders and soldiers were killed and 61 were wounded (Chu sgang lo rgyus rtsom sgrig tshogs chung 2000, 109–10.)

[31] Yang Yizhen 2010, 41.

> In the morning, [when] the 159th and 155th regiments discovered that the rebels had escaped, they tried to catch them, but Andrutsang's [Gombo Tashi's] soldiers all rode horses and moved very fast and disappeared. [Consequently] The attempt to get rid of Andrutsang failed this time and the PLA suffered heavy casualties. So on 6 September, the 159th and 155th regiments returned to Lhasa.[32]

The Central Committee was not impressed with this first battle either when it responded on 10 September to telegrams from the TWC. Their response conveyed approval for the TWC's pressuring the Kashag, but indirectly criticized the TWC and the Tibet Military command regarding its use of the PLA on offensive and clearly restated its defensive-oriented military strategy.

> [To] TWC:
>
> The telegrams of August 10 and 17 were received. We agree to your way of handling the Kashag's opinions about dealing with the Khamba rebels and traitors.
>
> However, be very cautious when it comes to the question of using the PLA to disable [Ch. xiao mie] the rebel armed forces. Only do it when the rebel forces are directly threatening our troops and the main transportation routes, and only do it when we are sure we can win. If we cannot fight good battles, it is better not to fight at all. Pay attention to this, and we hope that you will act according to this instruction.
>
> *Central Committee*
> *September 10, 1958*[33]

GOMBO TASHI AT SHANG GANDEN CHÖNGOR MONASTERY

After escaping from the PLA ambush, Gombo Tashi's cavalry moved on to Namling Dzong and the adjacent Shang Ganden Chöngor Monastery. Radru Ngawang, who was in the advance group of two hundred fighters, recalled his reception at the dzong where he went with thirty cavalry to take control of it. The dzong officials had been instructed by the Kashag not to assist or cooperate with any Chushigandru fighters, so he did not receive a friendly welcome, as he explained,

---

[32] Ji Youquan 1993b, 47.

[33] DPRC. Central Committee to TWC, 10 September 1958. In Chinese: "xizang gongwei: bayue shiri he shiqiri liangdian junxi. tongyi nimen guanyu chuli gesha dui kangren panluan he panguo fenzi yijian de zhengce, danzai shiyong renmin jiefangjun qu xiaomie panluan wuzhuang wenti shang xuyao shenshen congshi. zhizai panjun zhijie weixie wojun he zhuyao jiaotongxian de shihou cai shangma, erqie yaozai you bawo de shihou cai shangma, yinwei ruguo dade buhao buru buda. zhedian qingjia zhuyi. wangji yizhao banli." Zhongyang.

> We arrived at Namling Dzong [which was on a hill] just after sunrise, and as we were walking up to its entrance, two representatives of the dzong, one a layman . . . and the other a monk, were coming down. [They were the representatives left by the two dzongpön, who were not then on location.] They asked us where we were going, and when we told them that we needed to see the head of the dzong, they said that he wasn't there and that we can't go inside—we should stay below [in the village]. They also told us that they had received many orders from the government [Kashag] saying the monastery and the dzong should be on guard, since there are a lot of disturbances going on, and that we cannot give the weapons to anybody and should keep the weapons well.[34]
>
> We, in turn, told the two of them that we had been sent from afar by Chushigandru, the "army to defend religion" (Tib. tensung danglang magar), so we don't have any choice but to go to the dzong. To this, they again replied, "Please don't go to the dzong." They didn't want to let us go to the dzong and told us again that we should stay in the area below the dzong where the villagers live. They told us that they will arrange a place for us to stay there, and that after that, we can talk down there.
>
> I then left Commander Phurba Trinley of the Derge Regiment with five or six fighters and told him to talk with these two representatives and keep them there [on the path] while I went with . . . about twenty fighters up to the dzong.
>
> When we arrived up there, the gate was closed, so we loaded our rifles and banged on the door with big stones while shouting at those inside to open up. After a while, an older and a younger man opened the gate, and we pressed our rifle barrels against their chests and said that [we've heard] that there are Chinese inside the dzong. They assured us that there was not even a single Chinese person inside and told us to please come in. When we went in we saw that there were about twenty to thirty young village men in a room with about thirty 305 English carbine rifles that were to be used to protect the dzong.
>
> Q. Was this [change in attitude toward you] because they were afraid?
>
> A. Yes. They were showing that they were afraid [of us]. For example, they untied their hair braids to show respect to us while they were telling us to come in.
>
> Q. When you left for Ganden Chöngor, did you know the Tibetan government had internally agreed to give Chushigandru the weapons?
>
> A. Gombo Tashi probably had a plan, but we didn't know much about that.
>
> Q. So did you think that the Tibetan government was really unwilling to give you the weapons?
>
> A. We were suspicious [that that was the case], because they were not letting us go into the dzong.

---

[34] The words he used for "keep well" were "bdag po yag po rgyobs" (Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.01.

> Q. At that time didn't you think that they were just pretending?
>
> A. No. I didn't think like that at all.
>
> Q. Were you angry when they wouldn't let you in?
>
> A. Yes. We were angry, so we detained the two representatives (on the path) and went to the dzong. After we got inside the dzong, the representatives and Phurba Trinley came up. . . . So that is how we seized control of the dzong and hoisted the flags of Chushigandru and the Army to Defend Religion on the gate of the dzong.[35]

Meanwhile, the main action was taking place at Ganden Chöngor, a medium-sized monastery of about five hundred monks where the weapons were stored. When part of the advance Khamba unit arrived there, as had happened at the dzong, the monks refused to open the door. This led to a heated debate among the Khambas, some arguing they should use their weapons to force their way in but others insisting that since they were the "army to defend religion," how can they shoot at and maybe kill monks. The latter view carried the day, so the advance Khambas left and set up tents in a park near the monastery and waited until Gombo Tashi arrived with the main force. They didn't have to wait long, because Gombo Tashi arrived grandly the next day, to the sound of trumpets and amidst a huge cloud of dust from their animals' hooves.[36]

Gombo Tashi called the monastery leaders to meet with him, and after a private discussion, they agreed to hand over the weapons. We don't know what Gombo Tashi said, because according to the Tibetan political system, Phala had absolutely no authority over those weapons and, in addition, officially there was no way the monks could have turned over the arms cache without the agreement of the dzong, since they were jointly responsible for the guns. However, the dzong heads could not give that permission without the written consent of the Kashag, which would have taken too long to obtain, even if the Kashag had wanted the Khambas to get the guns, which they certainly had not. For example, in chapter 8 it will be seen that Kalön Surkhang at this same time ordered two hundred Tibetan Army troops from Shigatse to Shelkar Dzong in southwest Tibet to protect the arms cache stored there from Chushigandru.

Consequently, it was Phala who secretly arranged for Gombo Tashi to be able to get the weapons cache without fighting, either through a message to the monastic heads, or by telling Gombo Tashi what to say. The stature and reputation of the Dalai Lama's Lord Chamberlain was sufficient to persuade the monastic leaders that he was acting on behalf of the Dalai Lama, so they agreed to his instructions to turn over the guns. Phala, in an interview in India after 1959, actually confirmed this.

> I told him [Gombo Tashi] about the ammunition cache in Shang which he could take. Gombo Tashi was uncertain about the condition of the arms there and how old they were, so I inquired about the quantity and quality of the arms in Shang and

---

35. Radru Ngawang, interviews, India, 1992, H.0012.03 and .05.
36. Radru Ngawang, interviews, India, 1992, H.0012.01 and .03.

> learned they seemed ample. There were also some artillery pieces there. I gave permission for these arms to be taken out by Gombo Tashi, who then used them against the Chinese, causing them great trouble.[37]

Phala's mention that he was able to contact the leaders of the monastery and have them check out the condition of the weapons adds credence to Phala's assertion that he gave permission for the transfer. Gombo Tashi, therefore, got the weapons without a fight, although it was agreed to make it seem like the monastery leaders were forced to give up the weapons. He also had to agree that only one or two Khamba leaders should go inside the monastery to the site of the guns, because the monks were afraid that the regular Khambas would steal other things. They said that the monks themselves would carry the weapons outside. Radru Ngawang was one of the Khambas selected to go inside, and he recalled,

> So I went to the ammunition storeroom . . . .which was located inside the monk's assembly hall. There was a secret door through a cupboard under a shrine. It was a large room that was as big as a two-pillar Tibetan room. All of the bullets were in iron trunks, each trunk containing 2,500 bullets. [These trunks were so heavy] that we had to divide the bullets to make carryable loads for the animals.
>
> Q. How many trunks were there?
>
> A. There were about a hundred [so there were about 250,000 bullets]. . . . and [also] 493 English 305 [303 Lee-Enfield] carbines. Six rifles were missing. There were also 18 Bren guns, 18 Sten guns, and 8 large and small artillery pieces. . . .[38]
>
> Q. Could that one room hold all of that?
>
> A. No. The artillery pieces were kept in another room. There were 6 small artillery pieces in the same room. The monks who carried out the guns asked us to leave 100 English 305 carbines with ammunition for themselves. They explained that after this, the Chinese won't let them remain quiet, so they were going to fight with the Chinese, and [if need be] they were going to die. I agreed, and when I told Gombo Tashi that I had left 100 rifles with them, he said that was alright, but I shouldn't tell anyone about it.
>
> The monks, however, quickly changed their minds and decided that keeping some rifles would not be beneficial, so they told the Khambas to take all the arms, and then also gave them the pistols and rifles that were owned by the Labrang [the incarnate lama's organization]. They also said that many of the younger, able-bodied monks wanted to go along with Chushigandru, but Gombo Tashi flatly refused their request, telling them that there was no way they could go because they were not ready with horses, et cetera, and [in any case] he didn't want to take monks to make war, so he told them, "You all stay here. Nothing [bad] will happen, and if it should

---

[37] Phala, ms., Tibetan transcript of interview, 1983, Information Office, Dharamsala, India.

[38] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992 H.0012.01. In another part of the interview he mentioned 495 English carbines and 126 metal boxes with 2,500 bullets each. He also said that the 2 larger cannons were 16mm.

> happen, then we have a plan of our own." *So we told them that the Indians and the Americans were going to help us. We used to say things like that [subject laughs].* So we didn't take any monks with us, but we did take all the arms."[39]

Having secured the weapons, Gombo Tashi convened a meeting of all the commanders to decide how to proceed back to Lhoka.[40] There were different opinions about this, as Radru Ngawang recalled,

> Our plan was to go to Lhoka as soon as we got the guns . . . I thought the troops should be divided into small groups of thirty to forty riders and return like that. [However], the [other] Chushigandru commanders had many different opinions and finally it was agreed to ask the the protector deity Shungden for a prophecy. . . . Shungden answered, "It will be good for the officers and the soldiers of Chushigangdru to all go together." And so, like that, it was decided to follow the prophecy and we returned all together via Nyemo [the same route they had originally planned to come on].[41]

However, first Chushigandru stayed at Shang Ganden Chöngor for another five or so days, resting and cleaning and oiling their new weapons, and giving the Chinese defector Lobsang Tashi (who had been an artillery officer) and an Amdowa named Kelsang a chance to do some target shooting with the cannons. At the same time, they called some blacksmiths living nearby and had them make a large amount of horseshoes.[42] And, in accordance with the Tibetan tradition whenever a change in officeholder occurs, for example when the head of a dzong changes, they prepared and signed a detailed document itemizing every item in the dzong. So in this case, this entailed a list of every gun and box of ammunition that was being taken, which was signed with the seals of both Chushigandru's Military-Political Office (Tib. magsi legung] and the abbot and officials of Shang Ganden Chöngor Monastery. It affirmed that both sides agreed about the numbers of items taken.[43]

Gombo Tashi and his force finally left for Lhoka on 15 September 1958, again blowing trumpets and carrying the flags of Chushigandru.[44]

The Second Nyemo Ambush

When the main PLA forces returned to Lhasa after the first ambush, they left a small intelligence squad on horseback to report by wireless radio about the status and location of the Khambas. Thus, when Gombo Tashi started to return with the

---

39. Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.01.
40. Chu sgang lo rgyus rtsom sgrig tshogs chung 2000, 126.
41. Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2002, H.0012.05.
42. Chu sgang lo rgyus rtsom sgrig tshogs chung 2000, 120–21.
43. Ibid., 121–25.
44. Ibid., 126.

weapons via Nyemo, they notified military headquarters in Lhasa, which again sent the 159th and 155th Regiments "to encircle and wipe out the rebels."[45]

The Khambas' trip back was to take them first to Wuyuk, and then to the ferry site, where they would cross the Yarlungtsangpo River and continue on to Lhoka.[46] However, when the advance force reached Wuyuk, its scouts spotted a convoy of vehicles coming down the motor road from Lhasa. Despite Gombo Tashi's instructions to avoid the Chinese unless attacked, the advance guard's leaders set up a deadly ambush, and on 17 September, they opened fire when the Chinese convoy entered their kill zone.[47]

Radru Ngawang recalled the ambush,

> At Wuyuk Dzomtang we laid an ambush in an area that was extremely rocky. Only about seven trucks entered our [ambush] site, while the others were still coming. Among these, there were six or seven Chinese girls in military uniforms . . . . They were killed, including all the other Chinese. The rest of the vehicles did not arrive. We held this area until our main group had passed by the road and then we set fire to two trucks.[48]

A Chinese report on this attack, which was the first major Chushigandru offensive action in Central Tibet, reveals the Chinese frustration and surprise,

> In the early morning of 17 September, Jiang Wenqi, the Vice Director of the Intelligence Department, was leading a small group of four staff officers who were following the rebels of Andrutsang (Gombo Tashi). They discovered that the rebels were engaged in some kind of action on the north side of the Mala Mountains, and they thought this was part of the group of rebels who had gone with Andrutsang to Ganden Chöngor Monastery. Jiang and his men quickly left the mountainside and went to the Lhasa-Shigatse road, where they found a place to hide beside the road. They were about to report to the Military Headquarters, when a PLA vehicle came rushing toward them. When Jiang Wenqi jumped onto the road to stop it, the driver stuck his head out of the window and impatiently said, "I can't give you a ride, as we are in a hurry."
>
> Jiang did not reply to the driver, but went to the right side of the truck and asked: "Who is the leader here?" Senior Captain Wang Nengqin continued to be impatient with this guy who was dressed in civilian clothes. He thought he was just a local worker, and replied, "I am the leader. What do you want?" "Get out of the vehicle," Jiang said firmly. Wang was not sure where this thin, strange looking guy had come from, so he got out of the vehicle, but was still very arrogant.

---

[45] Ji Youquan 1993b, 46.

[46] Chu sgang lo rgyus rtsom sgrigs tshogs chung 2000, 130.

[47] Ibid., 126–27.

[48] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.03. Deng Shaodong, Deputy Commander of the PLA in Lhasa, said they were sixteen doctors and nurses who were going to the Shigatse hospital to work (Deng Shaodong 1985, 41).

Jiang said: "I am from the Intelligence Department of the Military Headquarters." Hearing this, Wang's attitude softened a little bit and he whispered, "Can we help you with some emergency?" "No, I am not asking you for help. I would like to know where you are heading," Jiang said. Wang replied, "We are going to conduct physical exams for the officers of the 160th Regiment." Jiang asked: "Do you know that there are enemy forces nearby?" Wang said, "No, I don't." Jiang then said, "There are rebels in the nearby mountains, so you have to be very cautious."

Every PLA soldier in Tibet knew about the PLA's [Nyemo] campaign against Gombo Tashi, but Wang thought that the rebels that Jiang was talking about were only a few escaping enemy troops, and thus they were nothing to be afraid of. He thought that this intelligence officer was making a big noise about a tiny issue. He laughed and said, "Damn it. It is just a few rebels. I was afraid we would not encounter any of them. It will be good luck for us if we do meet them, so I can catch some of these bastards and make a huge contribution to our campaign."

Jiang looked at him and said: "It is better to be cautious, Captain." Wang replied, "Don't worry, pal." Wang did not know that he was talking to the famous vice director of the intelligence department, and he did not even salute Jiang. He just jumped into the vehicle and ordered the driver. "Go." Jiang Wenqi held the door and said seriously: "Do not be careless." Wang said, "Nothing to worry about," and left.

Around 9 A.M., the vehicles of the PLA medical team were stopped at the steepest part of the Mala Mountain when rebels fired from both sides of the road (Jiang had looked at his watch when he heard the gunshots). The driver was killed instantly, and the truck went into the protective ditch on the right side of the road. Its engine was dead. Gunshots came violently from both sides, and the medical team members fired back from the trucks. Four of them were killed after a little while.

Wang Nengqin jumped out of the truck, and immediately ordered everyone out. People got out of the truck and tried to hide themselves in the ditch on the side of the road. The bullets came in a heavy wave of fire, so the PLA could not even raise their heads. Wang realized that he had run into a large group of rebels. He decided to try to [break out] and occupy the mountaintop on their right and wait there until reinforcement troops came. They tried to do this twice, but failed. The rebels on both sides of the mountain kept pressing them down onto the road. The team fought hard, but they were too few in number. The battle was finished in less than thirty minutes.

The rebels rushed down onto the road, and when they saw that a few seriously wounded medical team members were still alive, they killed them with their swords. The rebels were afraid that many PLA troops would come soon, so they escaped without taking anything. In this quick battle, the rebels did a clean job of wiping out an entire PLA medical team.

When Jiang Wenqi heard the gunshots, he thought it must be an encounter between the medical team and the rebels, but he could not help the team since he only had four officers who only were carrying pistols, so he immediately reported this to the military headquarters.

When the troops sent by the military headquarters arrived at the mountainside, the battle was long over. Jiang led the troops rushing toward the battlefield, but when

> they got there, everyone was shocked. All sixteen people on the medical team, including the drivers, had died near the truck, several with large sword cuts on their bodies.
>
> This was the first battle ever where the rebels had sought out to fight with the PLA and the PLA had lost it. It was the first time that the PLA suffered such a big defeat in one battle. The Tibetan Military Headquarters reported their loss to the Central Committee, and the TWC and Military Headquarters demanded that the Kashag punish the rebels, although both Zhang Jingwu and Zhang Guohua knew that that was impossible. The Kashag supported the rebels, so how could they punish them? However, they had to make their demand as a routine. The Kashag verbally agreed to the demand, but found various reasons not to do it.[49]

The day after this attack, a Tibetan government monk official (a tsendön) named Gyentsen Tempel arrived at Wuyuk from Lhasa, and recalled the situation he found there,

> I was going from Lhasa to Shigatse in a car that belonged to the TWC. Chape [another Tibetan Government official] was in the car with us. . . . When we arrived at Wuyuk, the Khambas who had taken the guns from the monastery had just left the day before. They had [ambushed a convoy and had] killed the steward of Dungar Monastery and had destroyed a Phari trader's private car that they had thought was a Chinese car. I saw these myself. I heard that they [also] destroyed many Chinese vehicles and killed many people.
>
> Q. Were you afraid when you were in Wuyuk?
>
> A. Yes I was. . . . Chape told me that now we should go only in cars that held Tibetans. . . . We waited a few days because the local Wuyuk officials said some Khambas may be coming again, and then we went on to Shigatse. At this time, one or two cars would not go alone. Only convoys of fifty to sixty vehicles traveling together would go. Each car had two drivers with guns.[50]

In the meantime, Chushigandru had already sent an advance force of about one hundred horsemen from Wuyuk with orders to rush ahead and secure the ferry site they wanted to use. However, as they neared the site, they found that they had arrived too late.

A Chushigandru account described the defeat,

> When they arrived, they suddenly found themselves face-to-face with PLA troops who were waiting for them. The PLA had arrived from Chusul and were in control of the ferry site. A battle continued all that day, but when the Khambas tried to retreat when nightfall arrived, they didn't know this area, so they retreated into a dead end and therefore had to continue fighting. They also sent a messenger back to the main force telling them of the situation. At dawn of the next day, reinforcements from the

---

[49] Ji Youquan 1993b, 56–58.

[50] Gyentsen Tempel, interview, India, 1993, H.0014.01.

> main [Chushigandru] force arrived, and the fighting continued. However, the Chinese side was also receving reinforcements. Another messenger was sent to [Chushigandru] headquarters asking for more fighters and ammunition, but at that time the fighters learned that about one thousand PLA troops were close to arriving at Nyemo Dzong from Tsang [in the southwest], and the main Chushigandru headquarters heard that another roughly one thousand PLA troops were moving down towards Nyemo from Yangbajen in the north. At this point, Gombo Tashi decided to move the main force towards Chushul, so while one group was sent as reinforcements to Takdruka, two others were sent to the areas east and west of Takdruka, and one group was sent to guard the access to Nyemo Dokarsumdo. After several days of fierce fighting, Gombo Tashi finally gave the order to give up trying to cross the Yarlungtsangpo River from Nyemo, and fled north via Kargang to avoid getting encircled.[51]

Radru Ngawang added,

> We tried to cross the river via the ferry port in lower Nyemo [Tib. Nyemo thil], but from Tsang, one to two thousand Chinese were coming down and from Chushul there were more coming. Before we arrived at the ferry port, the Chinese who were coming from Chushul had already arrived. Then from Dokarsumdo, another [group of PLA] was coming. So the fight was coming from all three directions. . . . Then a real big battle took place. . . . We lost a lot of men and we began to lose ground, and we lost about half of the village area. . . . but we killed a hell of a lot of them. The fight lasted two whole days and nights, and on the third, we withdrew [to the north] and went to Yangpajen.[52]

When the Chushigandru fighters arrived near Kargang, there were already many PLA troops there, so when they moved forward they had to fight battles with them, but finally they switched plans again and extricated themselves by going to Yangbajen over a very difficult and dangerous trail (with the help of a nomad as their guide).[53]

A Chinese account of the second Nyemo battle is interesting, because it again reveals that the Chinese felt they had failed because they had not been able to kill or capture Gombo Tashi and his force.

> At midnight on September 20, the 159th Regiment met Andrutsang in Nyemo again. The third batallion started fighting immediately. Since they encountered the enemy suddenly, there was confusion in command and they did not think of holding the

---

[51] Chu sgang lo rgyus rtsom sgrig tshogs chung 2000, 130–39. Kargang was located in the upper part of Yangbajen south of the pass. When you go down from Kargang to the east, you reach Tshurpu. When you go to the south from Kargang, you will reach Nyemo Shuyaga. When you go to the north you reach Yangbajen.

[52] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.01.

[53] Chu sgang lo rgyus rtsom sgrig tshogs chung 2000, 139.

> enemy for a while. At 2 A.M., when the second batallion arrived, Andru Gombu Tashi had already escaped in the direction of Kargang. In the afternoon, the 159th Regiment pursued the rebels and ordered the fourth company that was waiting in Kargang to stop the enemy. . . .
>
> [Because] the fourth company had been waiting for a long time, its political commisar had gotten impatient, so he led his troop to move forward. An hour later, they encountered the rebels and in some confusion, they started fighting with them, but they were not able to stop them. The first batallion heard fighting in front of them, and then they saw troops withdrawing. However, they couldn't make out for sure whether the withdrawing troops were the rebels or the PLA, so they didn't do anything. When they finally discovered they had let the enemy pass, it was too late. On September 30, all the PLA returned to Lhasa.[54]

Abo Rapgye, one of the leaders of the Khamba fighters from the Markham area, estimated that Chushigandru lost around one hundred sixty killed and wounded in this second ambush with the PLA.[55]

Radru Ngawang narrated Chushigandru's escape to the northeast,

> At this time, we were far away from the PLA in a hilly area that had forests. It was a place where trucks could not go. . . . It had a very narrow trail that was filled with boulders and was really not traveled on much. But when the situation is desperate, one has to go, and even the horses went on this narrow trail. We crossed the pass and went via Namru in the Lake Namtso area (Tib. chang namtsokha). There were no Chinese troops there, so we stayed for a few days, but we saw Chinese planes flying overhead to see where we had gone. We had some training about this, so when the planes came, we all stood up among the trees and rocks so that they would not see us. We rested at Lake Namtso for a few days, getting food from the nomads who lived there.
>
> Then we decided that the Damshung airport had to be attacked, so about one to two hundred riders were organized to strike the airport. We first sent a spy to reconnoiter the airport, but he reported that it was extremely well protected and we would take heavy losses if we attacked it, so we [dropped that idea and] made plans to wthdraw further east.
>
> Then we crossed the Jogtsela Pass and reached Reting Monastery, where we encountered two or three vehicles at the top of the pass, which we destroyed. There were also fifteen to twenty airport workers staying near the pass in a road maintenance station [Ch. dao ban], which we also also attacked on 2 October.[56] However, we were not able to kill all the Chinese because they had prepared their defenses well and had many grenades. One or two of our people were wounded, but no one was killed. . . .

---

[54] Ji Youquan 1993b, 48–49.

[55] Abo Rapgye, interview, India, 1992, H.0029.01.

[56] The date is from Zhonggong xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui, 1990, entry for 15 August 1958, 78.

> From the upper part of Reting, we crossed the river and came to the upper reaches of the Drigung valley at a place called Drigung Phowa Zangkha. From there we went to Drigung Thil [northeast of Drigung Monastery] and then we went to a place called Drigung Lungshö. From there we planned to go south to Mashung and then [from there] go on to the Yarlungtsangpo River, which we would cross, and rejoin the rest of Chushigandru in Lhoka.[57] We said that whatever happens, [in order to get back,] we have to go to Mashung.
>
> However, when we got to Lungshö, the Chinese were lying in ambush. There were about 2–3 ambush sites, but . . . there were only about 100 Chinese, so that evening at [Lungshö] we sent an advance force of about 200–300 riders [in another interview he said 100] on a night raid, which succeeded in killing many Chinese there and forcing the others to flee. . . . We obtained 30–40 Chinese horses there. So at Drigung Lungshö, we put on an excellent show. One or two died on our side and there were some wounded, but we did not suffer bad losses. . . . We stayed in Lungshö overnight.[58]

From Lungshö, Gombo Tashi's forces started their move south to Mashung, which was the gateway to reaching the Yarlungtsangpo River. When they reached the mountain pass between Lungshö and Mashung, local nomads informed the Khambas' advance force that the Chinese had arrived in the lower part of Mashung about five or six days earlier and had set up bunkers and about a hundred cannons/mortars on the sides of the hills. In other words, the PLA had again set up an ambush to block Gombo Tashi from returning to Lhoka. Radru Ngawang recalled what happened next,

> When Gombo Tashi and the main force arrived, Gombo Tashi sent about ten Amdowa riders to be on watch on this side of the mountain pass and another ten Litang riders . . . to be on watch on the other side, and then he convened a meeting [to discuss the warning and how to proceed].
>
> When we [I] arrived there [Radru was in the rear guard force, so he arrived after the main group had arrived], they were holding the meeting. They [Gombo Tashi] had decided to again consult Shungden, who prophesied, "Today is the time for us to go down there [to Mashung]. I, the ghost, will guarantee this. [Note: it is customary for deities (Tib. lha) to refer to themselves as ghosts when they talk through their mediums.][59]

Gombo Tashi's belief in Shungden led him to make a very costly mistake: he ordered his force to go ahead through Mashung despite the warning, and they rode right into the well-planned PLA ambush. Radru Ngawang, who was less inclined to base decisions on deities, commented sarcastically about Shungden and false prophesies.

---

[57] This would have brought them about 40–50 km east of Tsetang and close to Chushigandru's new home base at Lhagyari.

[58] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.06.

[59] Ibid.

> Q. So it was Shungden who told you guys to go forward, right?
>
> A. Yes. Shungden [the medium] was possessed by a Chinese ghost [laughs]."[60]

Another important Chushigandru leader from Targye Gomba, Jama Ngagdrug, also was critical of Gombo Tashi's predilection for making tactical battle decisions based on Shungden and said,

> Andru Jindag was a person who believed 100 percent in the deities. He was kind of stupid [Tib. klad lkugs] [that way]. Actually, he should have watched and investigated things. But he didn't know how to do that.[61]

Radru Ngawang continued his narration of the bloody ambush,

> When I got there, I saw that Gombo Tashi and all the other fighters had stopped [near the pass and were waiting], while a hundred advance troops of the Amdo and Targye Gomba batallions were already going down [from the pass] in accordance with Shungden's prophesy. When this advance force went down, the people who were sentries on the mountaintops saw the Chinese and started shouting, "Don't go down, the Chinese are waiting there." We immediately sent people to deliver a message telling them not to go. . . . At the same time, I looked through my binoculars and saw that the Chinese were standing up and it looked like they were getting ready to fire their cannons, so I said, "Hey. They are about to open fire." Just then they did open fire with many cannons [or mortars?] which made the sound "Wong Wong." They had set up about a hundred cannons on both sides of the mountain and they all fired simultaneously at both the advance force and the rest of our force, which was higher up.
>
> The place where we were meeting was not hit in this volley because the shells fell about a hundred yards short of where we were. Then, when all of us were running upwards back toward the mountain pass, they fired their artillery higher and higher and the whole area was filled with the dust of the exploding shells. We weren't able to see the Chinese to shoot at them. This battle was all cannon fire, so there was no way for [our] guns to reach them. . . .
>
> After the smoke from the artillery shells dissipated, I saw that the horses and mules of Gombo Tashi were jumping around, so I thought they he might have been hit by an artillery shell, and I felt extremely sad. So I went over there, [and saw that a Khamba named] Rara had been hit by shrapnel and his face was bleeding. He said, "Now it is useless [to fight] as Andrug Jinda (Gombo Tashi) was hit by an artillery shell. Now we just have to die properly." . . . When I got there [to where Gombo Tashi was] I saw that he had fallen down. . . . Gombo Tashi and many others had been hit with shrapnel [from shells and from rock fragments]. . . . When I lifted him up, his

---

[60] Ibid.

[61] Jama Ngagdrug, interview, India, 2003, H.0229.03.

eyes were covered with blood, so I wiped his face with a woolen cap and saw he was looking at me. Then he said, “You are Ngawang, right? The Jigje mahe talisman has protected me, I am okay. Go try to find some water.”

. . . After that the servant brought some water . . . and I asked Gombo Tashi if he was able to go up to a corner of the mountain [where the artillery couldn’t reach]. He said that he could, so I held him up, and then I saw that all of his body had been hit by rock fragments. I tied him with a scarf where he was bleeding, and the blood stopped. After we got to the corner of the mountain, we made a fire with some kind of plants [Tib. sulu], and my servant, who had a very good horse, had butter and a container of tsamba in his saddlebag, so we melted the butter to stop the bleeding. In that mountain corner there were a hundred riders. The artillery shells could not hit us there. . . .

At that moment, Gombo Tashi told us that we should try to seize the mountain pass. He said, “The Chinese have been going up to the mountain pass, so if we can’t seize the pass, all of us will be completely destroyed. Radru Ngawang should take some soldiers and go to the top of the pass” because [if the escape route gets cut off] not a single person will survive. . . . Gombo Tashi said three times that if the Chinese get there first, not even a single person [from our force] will be spared. I was thinking that Gombo Tashi was going to die because he had been hit by so much shrapnel, so I didn’t want to leave his body there. I thought we should not bury his body here, but should carry it with us. . . .

At that juncture, the [other] commanders told me to go up and take control of the mountain pass. They swore by the three jewels they would not leave Gombo Tashi here whether he is alive or dead, unless all of them were killed.

Gombo Tashi also told me . . . to take his gun, which was very precious to him, but I declined. I had an English 305 carbine and two cartridge belts full of bullets. I also had a Sten gun and a pistol. So I gave an order to go to capture the mountain pass. . . . I took my servant’s good horse and went together with another Litangpa named Sharlotsang Chöndze, who said that he wanted to join me. We had about a hundred riders. . . . The horses had to take rests, because they could not go for a long time [as it was so steep]. Then I gave them an order saying, “I will go up to the mountain pass first, and you people follow after me. If I should be killed, all of you should pile up the corpses one upon another [don’t retreat]. You should never withdraw from this place. If the Chinese get the pass, all of us will die.” All of them said, “No problem.”

My horse was a good one, as was Sharlotsang’s, so the two of us got to the mountain pass first. I left my horse there [just below the pass], and went [the final distance] to the pass on foot. At that point, the Chinese were coming up [from the other side] and were setting up their guns on the ground, so we encountered the Chinese on the mountain pass at the same time.

Q. At that moment, there were only the two of you, right?

A. Yes. . . . I fired my Sten gun immediately. The Chinese were not able to shoot, because they were coming up walking. After I shot them, some were wounded and they started running away. . . . At first, the Chinese were not able to shoot because

> they were running away, but after that many Chinese came up shooting at us from two sides. When we were shooting at each other, my body was hit with many bullets . . . While the fighting was still going on, it became dark so I couldn't see my wounds. The next day, I knew that I had been hit with 16 bullets that night and two bullets during the daytime. . . . So I tied up the wounds and stopped the bleeding. The other bullets had hit on my back, ribs, stomach and hips, but I had been protected from all of them by my talisman. . . .
>
> Q. Were there any traces of the bullets hitting you?
>
> A. On some parts of my body, there were reddish blisters, and in some part there were bruises, and some of the bullets were stuck in and I could just pull them out. One bullet hit my back, and blood was coming out of my mouth. . . .[62]

In the battle for control of the pass, Radru Ngawang and Sharlotsang had been wounded, knocked unconscious, and left for dead, but their fighting had allowed Gombo Tashi to escape northeast with what was left of the main force to a place called Sateng Dzong, which is part of Pembar Dzong. The PLA pursued him to the base of the Sateng Pass, but then turned around and returned to their home base. Chinese sources do not explain why they stopped pursuing Gombo Tashi at this point, but one Khamba leader said that Gombo Tashi had learned from some nomads that there was a Chinese force coming behind us, so he left about 130–140 fighters at a pass to stop them while he took the wounded and went on. Jama Ngagdrug, one of the commanders of that force, recalled,

> At that time, Andru Jindag (Gombo Tashi) came out from his tent wearing a gown and said that except for those who are wounded, all the other fighters have to go [to the pass]. This is the place where we should die. We have to make up our mind to die today." So we went to the top of the mountain pass and waited. The Chinese didn't see that we were there, so when about two hundred Chinese were approaching, we opened fire and killed most of them. The remaining Chinese went to hide on the mountain . . . so we fired cannons at the mountain.
>
> Q. Did the Chinese Lobsang Tashi fire the cannon [for you]?
>
> A. Yes. When he fired the cannon he destroyed all the Chinese. After that, we left that place.
>
> Q. In that battle, did you kill many Chinese?
>
> A. We annihilated [Tib. tsame] all two hundred of them. After that, the Chinese stopped chasing us from behind.[63]

This ended the running battles between Gombo Tashi's force and the pursuing PLA forces. Gombo Tashi had planned to y seize the weapons cache and return quickly to Lhoka within in 2–3 weeks, but 2 months later, he ended up isolated, in remote Sateng Dzong in Pembar (in the Shotalhosum area of Chamdo region), hundreds of miles northeast of Chushigandru headquarters in Lhoka.[64] It is not clear how many of his original 700–900 fighters were killed or wounded, but one Chushigandru commander who was with Gombo Tashi the whole time estimated that when Gombo Tashi reached Shotalhosum, there were only about 290 riders left out of the original more than 700 soldiers. Some of those missing had been killed in the battles, but many had gotten scattered and separated.[65] The local leader in Pembar said that when Gombo Tashi arrived, he had about 500–600 fighters left.[66] Whatever the exact number, it is clear that a significant part of Gombo Tashi's fighting force had been killed, wounded, or scattered.

---

[62] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.06.

[63] Jama Ngagdrug, interview, India, 2003, H.0229.02.

Gombo Tashi and his men were low on food and ammunition, their horses were exhausted, and of course he and many others were wounded, so they rested for a month in Sateng and then moved on to Pembar in Shotarlhosum. Ultimately, Gombo Tashi and his fighters were unable to return to Lhoka until after the 1959 uprising and after the Dalai Lama had left for India.

A VICTORY OR A DEFEAT?

In one sense, the Shang Ganden Chöngor expedition was a victory for the Khambas. Despite the PLA's superior weapons and communications capabilities, they were unable to stop Gombo Tashi from reaching Shang Ganden Chöngor and taking the weapons, let alone to kill or capture him and destroy his force. The PLA learned firsthand that Gombo Tashi and his Khamba troops were tough and capable fighters who could shoot straight, evade being trapped, and launch effective ambushes. The extent to which Chushigandru made an impression on the PLA is seen clearly in a Chinese source that cites a critique levied by the PLA's deputy commander in Lhasa, Deng Shaodong:

> On Dec. 3, 1958, Deng Shaodong . . . criticized the troops, saying: "the Central Military Committee [in Beijing] instructed us again and again that we should train our troops according to the specific conditions in Tibet, and that we should learn some guerrilla tactics. We only claimed that we would do this, but [really] we merely practiced a few listed training items on guerrilla fighting. We did not truly give training to our troops according to the specific conditions in Tibet. Neither did we train them with the most important things that are needed for us to fight with the rebels. In our defensive and offensive training programs, at the unit of a single squad and platoon, we assumed it was a battle with the American troops under the conditions of modern

---

[64] Shotalhosum was a large political unit north of Chamdo that comprised three dzongs: Shopando, Pembar, and Lho.

[65] Jama Ngagdrug, interview, India, 2003, H.0229.02.

[66] Phu Dündül, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0005.01.

> war, so we did not train our troops for the way we were fighting the rebels in Tibet. Besides, the instructions regarding warfare tactics were very confusing. . .[67]
>
> When these [Khamba] advance troops encountered a PLA unit, they quickly occupied the high spots and used the tactics of small teams to fight with the PLA. Since they were all on horseback, they often rode along mountaintops and could easily discover the PLA. When the rebels encountered the PLA, they did not try to fight to the end. They would fight during the day and run away during the night. Especially when they discovered a large group of our troops, they escaped faster. When they were attacked, they tried to do self-defense when our military power was weak and ran away immediately when our military power was strong. And when they ran away, they used different routes and sometimes ran in big circles in order to confuse our troops. The PLA, therefore, were always unsure of which direction they were going, and did not succeed in surrounding the enemy and defeating them. . . .
>
> As a result of our failure in this battle, the Tibetan armed rebels felt the PLA was easy to deal with and could do nothing to them, so they became more aggressive and started to plot to get rid of the PLA completely from Tibet.[68]

Despite this negative critique of the PLA's perfomance against Gombo Tashi, in a broader strategic sense, the Shang Ganden Chöngor campaign was a devasting failure for Chushigandru, because it separated Gombo Tashi, the overall commander of Chushigandru, from the main headquarters in Lhoka at the critical start of its operations. Without Gombo Tashi in Lhoka in charge, a comprehensive battle plan for the insurgency was not made and, as will be seen in chapter 10, serious internal problems arose that weakened the unified command structure and the effectiveness of the insurgency. In addition, the cache of arms from Ganden Chöngor was not available to new recruits arriving in Drigutang.

On the other hand, why did Mao and the Central Committee instruct the PLA to stop its offensive actions against Gombo Tashi in the north and refrain from starting any offensive action in the south against Chushigandru headquarters? In other words, why did they let both sections of Chushigandru remain without any military pressure? Chushigandru was in control of Lhoka not because they had driven the PLA out of this area and prevented them from returning, but because the PLA had been instructed not to try to take control of it. The Chinese had not only stood by in Lhasa and let the Khambas leave to set up their headquarters in Lhoka, but had then given them virtual safe havens in both Lhoka and Sateng/Shotalhosum.

There are no Chinese documents regarding this, but I think it is clear that Mao and the Central Committee did not want to inadvertently provoke a Tibet-wide conflagration as it had in Sichuan. Mao's "Great Contraction" program was aimed at calming the situation in Lhasa by taking reforms off the table and sending thousands of new Han cadres and PLA troops back to inland China, while allowing the Tibetan government to continue to be in charge of administering Tibet internally. Mao, in essence, was giving himself more time to "win over" the Dalai Lama and the elite, and more time to pressure the Dalai Lama to deal with the Khambas.

---

[67] Ji Youquan 1993b, 50–51.

[68] Ibid., 53–55.

Despite these negative events, there was some good new for Chushigandru: the CIA finally secured approval from the Eisenhower administration to send arms to the Khamba insurgents starting in October 1958, when an airdrop of weapons was made in Lhoka. This development will be discussed in chapter 10.

And on still another front on the Chinese side, the TWC itself was in the throes of a bitter internal conflict between Fan Ming and Zhang Guohua, the latter acting as a proxy for Mao and the Central Committee. Mao's views on Tibet strategy, of course, dominated, but Fan Ming's opposing views represented a viable alternative strategy that, in retrospect, might well have produced a more favorable outcome for China. This conflict will be discussed in chapter 7.

7

The Fall of Fan Ming

Sino-Tibetan historians of the 1950s in the West have generally viewed the Chinese in Tibet as a monolithic entity with a homogeneous set of views and policies. As I have shown in volumes 2 and 3, that was clearly not the case. Not only was Mao's "gradualist" policy opposed by Fan Ming, the leading cadre from the Qinghai/Gansu-based Northwest Bureau (First Field Army), but even before that, there was also a bitter dispute over who should head the Tibet Work Committee (TWC) that pitted Fan Ming against Zhang Guohua, the top leader from the Sichuan-based Southwest Bureau (and the Commander of the Eighteenth Army Corps of the Second Field Army). This internal discord pervaded the 1950s and came to a final conclusion only in 1958, when changing internal political dynamics in China—the start of Mao's Anti-Rightist Campaign (Ch. fanyou yundong)—afforded Zhang Guohua and CCP leaders in Beijing an opportunity not just to stop Fan Ming from continuing to push his own views but to eliminate him entirely from Tibet.

In June 1957, Mao launched the party Rectification campaign (ch. zhengfeng yundong) in inland China to criticize work within the Party, but this quickly morphed into Mao's famous Anti-Rightist Campaign, which sought to purge the CCP of members who were too capitalist or too bourgeoisie. Being "rightist" in communist ideology normally referred to those who were representatives of the capitalist class and/or were more favorable to capitalist modes of production than to collectivism. However, this campaign actually went further and purged all sorts of intellectuals, including some party figures who were disliked or distrusted by Mao (or by Mao's supporters at lower levels), including some like Fan Ming, who were really extreme leftists.

Mao himself compared his Anti-Rightist campaign to the purges of China's first Emperor, Qin Shihuang, saying, "He buried 460 scholars alive; we have buried 46,000 scholars alive . . . You [intellectuals] revile us for being Qin Shihuang. You are wrong. We have surpassed Qin Shihuang a hundredfold."[1] One source says that Li Weihan, the director of the United Front Work Committee at that time, estimated (in 1984) that "about 550,000 people, mostly intellectuals, owners or managers in industry and commerce, and members of so-called 'democratic parties,' were classified as 'rightists.' The majority of those lost their jobs and positions, and some were sent to forced labor re-education [camps], prisons, and border areas or the hinterland."[2]

The Anti-Rightist Campaign in China has been well-studied so will not be discussed here, but how that campaign played out in Tibet to destroy Fan Ming is the focus of this chapter.[3]

The main anti-rightist campaign in Tibet was officially started by the TWC on 4 April 1958. Over the next seven months, the TWC held a series of anti-rightist meetings (rectification meetings) during which Fan Ming was accused, investigated, and sentenced, together with what was called "Fan Ming's anti-party group," which included his wife and supporters who were mostly from the Northwest Bureau.[4]

The conflict between Fan Ming and Zhang Guohua is sometimes explained in China as the result of personality. Fan Ming's ego was too big, and he wanted more power and prestige than Zhang Guohua. However, while this may well be a significant factor, there were very important different strategic viewpoints at play that cut to the core of how China should absorb Tibet, for unlike Mao, Fan Ming advocated doing land reforms quickly and ending the old society.

The Fan Ming story began before both Fan Ming and Zhang Guohua arrived in Lhasa in 1951 with their respective army units from the Northwest Bureau (NWB) and the Southwest Bureau (SWB).[5] At that time, Zhang Guohua had understood that he would be appointed First Secretary of both the Tibet Work Committee and the Tibet Military Affairs Headquarters, while Fan Ming, who arrived a few months after Zhang Guohua, felt strongly that he should be the First Secretary of the TWC while Zhang Guohua should only head the PLA, that is, the Military Affairs Headquarters.[6] Li Zuomin, an important cadre in the TWC, recalled,

---

[1] Mao Zedong 1969, 72. (This speech by Mao was given in 1958 at the Second Session of the Eighth National Congress of the CCP in Beijing.)

[2] See www.uglychinese.org/AntiRightists.html (accessed 1 January 2015).

[3] The rectification/Anti-Rightist campaign in Tibet took place only among Party officials and did not involve Tibetan government officials, who were unaware that it was occurring.

[4] Zhonggong Xizang dangshi dashiji bianweihui, entry for 4 April 1958, 75–76.

[5] At this time China was divided into six geographic regions (North, Northeast, Central, East, Northwest, and Southwest), each of which had a Military-Administrative Bureau/Committee (Ch. junzheng weiyuanhui; Tib. magsi uyön lhengang), through which the PLA would administer the area until a time when "people's governments" could be established. The Southwest Bureau (SWB) (Ch. xinan ju) and the Second Field Army were in charge of Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, Xikang, and Tibet. The Northwest Bureau (NWB) (Ch. xibei ju) and the First Field Army were responsible for Qinghai, Xinjiang, Shaanxi, and Gansu. In January 1950, the main task of "liberating" Tibet had been given to the Sichuan-based Second Field Army/SWB, which was under the leadership of Liu Bocheng and Deng

> They [Fan Ming and Zhang Guohua] argued, and when the TWC was to be formally set up, Fan Ming didn't agree. He indicated that he had to be the main party secretary. . . . So he spent a week and wrote a memo of almost 10,000 characters . . . whose title was "Some Strategies on the Present United Front Work Line in Tibet." Then he called a meeting of the Work Committee [TWC] and presented it there. However, nobody agreed, so finally he submitted it to the Central Committee. Consequently, at that time [just after they all first arrived], the TWC could not be set up according to the [original] plan, so the Central Committee was in a desperate situation . . .[7]

This dispute placed Mao and the Central Committee in an awkward position, because they did not want to insult or alienate either the SWB or the NWB by choosing Zhang Guohua over Fan Ming or vice versa, so they finally chose neither. Instead, on 7 March 1952, they appointed a "neutral" cadre, Zhang Jingwu, as First Secretary.[8]

Zhang Jingwu had been sent from Beijing to Lhasa via India immediately following the signing of the Seventeen-Point Agreement as the "representative" of the Central Committee. He was sent to meet the Dalai Lama, who was then staying in Yadong, and persuade him to return to Lhasa rather than flee to India. He was then to go to Lhasa to represent Mao and the Central Committee until the main army/officials arrived overland. Zhang, therefore, was not expected to stay in Tibet, and was planning to return to his position in Beijing after the Chinese presence in Lhasa was established. He, therefore, was an excellent compromise choice, since he was not part of either the SWB or NWB, but had previously worked in

---

Xiaoping. The lead army unit in the Chamdo campaign was the Second Field Army's Eighteenth Army Corps under the command of Zhang Guohua, although they were supported by elements of the First Field Army/NWB, whose cavalry played a major role in the Chamdo campaign.

[6] The history of Fan Ming has been presented in detail in volumes 2 and 3, so only a short summary of the past events is given here.

[7] Li Zuomin, interview, Beijing, 2011.

[8] Although most of the troops and cadres in Tibet were from the SWB, The NWB and its associated First Field Army was a powerful player in China at this time, because Commander/Commissar of the First Field Army Peng Dehuai was the commander in chief of China's volunteer army in the Korean War and then, after returning to Beijing, China's defense minister (from 1954 to 1959), as well as first deputy chairman of the Central Military Commission. Peng was also a member of the Politburo.

both of these bureaus and had good relations with officials in both.[9] So the Central Committee settled the TWC dispute by instructing Zhang Jingwu to remain in Lhasa and serve as the First Secretary of the TWC (while still retaining his position in Beijing). Under him, Zhang Guohua was appointed as the first deputy secretary, as well as the head of the Tibet Military Region. Tan Guansan (from the SWB) became the second deputy secretary and Fan Ming (from the NWB) was the third deputy secretary. Although this gave the SWB control over the TWC, to placate Fan Ming, he and his NWB colleagues were given important authority over the day-to-day operation of the TWC. For example, Fan Ming was appointed head of the important United Front Work Department, which managed relations with Tibetans, while Ya Hanzhang was given the position of general secretary of the TWC. Other top NWB cadres, like Mu Shengzhong, were also given important positions. Meanwhile, given the serious disunity within the Party in Tibet, the Central Committee took oversight of the TWC directly into its own hands, so that the TWC had to ask the Central Committee for approval regarding decisions, rather than the SWB, as it had been doing.[10]

The more significant dispute within the TWC involved the CCP's policy for Tibet. Because Mao and the Central Committee chose to pursue a "Gradualist" Policy, the TWC was tasked with working through the Dalai Lama and the Kashag, and with waiting to implement democratic reforms until they were in agreement. This gradualist strategy was not only top-down but prioritized the Dalai Lama over the Panchen Lama. All the leading cadres from the SWB, such as Zhang Guohua and Tan Guansan, agreed with this, as did Zhang Jingwu. However, Fan Ming and some of his subordinate cadres from the NWB did not.

As discussed in chapter 2, Fan Ming contended that the Dalai Lama and the Lhasa elite would never agree to give up their estates, so while they were overtly acting and speaking cordially with Chinese officials and even talking about doing reforms in the future, covertly they were working to force the Chinese out of Tibet. Fan Ming thought that the primary contradiction in Tibet was not the contradiction among classes or the contradiction among nationalities, but rather the contradiction of *unification versus separation.* And with regard to this, the main issue for him was that the Dalai Lama's group in his view was pro-imperialist and supported separatist activities, whereas he saw the *Panchen Lama's group as a completely patriotic group who advocated the unity of China.* So for him, it was crucial for the

---

[9] Between 1946 and 1950, Zhang Jingwu worked first as chief of staff of the Northwest Military Region under He Long and Xi Zhongxun, and then went with He Long, Li Jingquan, and Wang Weizhou to the Southwest Military Region, where he was also chief of staff. He was then promoted to director of the General Office of the Central Military Commission in Beijing and was one of the representatives of the Chinese government in the Seventeen-Point Agreement negotiations (Che Minghuai and Zhang Huachuan 2009, 12–16).

[10] See Goldstein 2007, 296–300 for a discussion of the first TWC.

CCP to focus on propping up the Panchen Lama's group. Fan Ming, therefore, argued that letting the Dalai Lama continue to administer all of Tibet internally was a flawed strategy that not only would ultimately fail, but would foster more splittist activities, not more loyalty. And it would continue to leave the Tibetan masses under the exploitive manorial estate system, while also compelling the CCP cadres to treat the Tibetan lay and religious elite estate holders—the class enemies in inland (Han) China—with deference and respect.

Fan Ming's Tibet strategy involved treating the Panchen Lama, with whom he had close relations, as the head of an autonomous region in Tibet with equal status and power as the Dalai Lama. He felt that by making use of the terrible relations that existed between the Panchen Lama's administration and the Dalai Lama's government, and by prioritizing the Panchen Lama, a set of conditions could be created that would result in Tibet being reformed quickly.

The history of the relations between the camps of the Panchen and Dalai Lamas is long and complex, but the most relevant phase began in November 1923, when a dispute between the 13th Dalai Lama and the 9th Panchen Lama over the latter's refusal to pay extra taxes to fund Tibet's new army troops led the 9th Panchen Lama to flee to China.[11] The Tibetan government sent troops to apprehend him before he reached the Chinese border, but were unsuccessful. Lhasa lost the Panchen Lama but took control of all of his estates. In the years following this, the Panchen Lama was unable to negotiate terms with Lhasa for his return to Tibet, so not surprisingly, the 9th Panchen Lama's exile administration worked energetically to develop close ties with the Guomindang (GMD) government of Chiang Kai-shek. As early as 1929, they set up a Panchen's Bureau Office in Nanjing, the GMD capital, and received support from the GMD that paid for most of his officials' expenses.[12] The Panchen's officials saw the GMD as a powerful patron that they hoped would persuade or force Lhasa to restore the Panchen Lama to his traditional position in Tibet. However, that had not occurred by the time the 9th Panchen Lama died in exile in Qinghai Province in 1937.

A few years after that, in 1941, the Qinghai-based officials of the late Panchen Lama discovered a three-year-old boy named Tseden Gombo in Qinghai's Xunhua County who, according to their tests, was the true incarnation of the late Panchen Lama. The Dalai Lama's government, however, refused to recognize that boy, insisting that he be sent to Lhasa for a final examination along with several other candidates. The 9th Panchen Lama's entourage refused and went ahead on their own to enthrone the Qinghai boy. The 10th Panchen Lama, therefore, grew up in exile in Qinghai and Gansu and was twelve years old when the Chinese Communists took control of Qinghai/Gansu in 1949. Because of this history, his officials despised the Dalai Lama's government who, in their eyes, had not only forced the 9th Panchen Lama to flee into exile but also taken control of all his estates, refused to allow him to return and, finally, refused to accept their selection as the true 10th Panchen Lama.

---

[11] The following section comes from the detailed discussion of the early relations of the Chinese and the Panchen Lama in Goldstein 2007, 265–300.

[12] Jiangbian Jiacuo (Jambey Gyatso) 1989, 11.

In 1948–49, as the Chinese Communists were winning one victory after another in the civil war, it became increasingly obvious that the GMD was likely to lose China. This caused the Panchen Lama's officials to reassess their situation and allegiances. Despite the efforts of the GMD to persuade the Panchen Lama to flee with them to Taiwan by formally recognizing Tseden Gombo as the 10th Panchen Lama on 3 June 1949 and then sending Gao Changzhu, the head of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission, to attend the formal enthronement ceremony, the Panchen Lama shifted his allegiance to the CCP.

Mao, however, was also trying to win over the Panchen Lama. In early August 1949, he instructed Peng Dehuai, the head of the NWB where Fan Ming was then serving as the director of the Liaison Office (an office that dealt with ethnic affairs), to take special care in how he dealt with Tibetans, especially the Panchen Lama, as Peng moved to take control of Qinghai and Gansu. A few weeks later, on 26 August, Peng Dehuai instructed Fan Ming to establish good relations with the Panchen Lama, so Fan immediately sent several officials to Kumbum Monastery to start discussions with the Panchen Lama's officials.[13] The result of these efforts was summed up in Goldstein (2007):

> Their [the Panchen Lama's side's] decision was not long in coming. Having languished in exile in China for twenty-seven years, the overriding goal of the leaders of the Panchen's administration was to return to Tibet and reassume control of their territory according to what they considered were their historic rights. However, their hatred and distrust of the Tibetan government meant that they would never place themselves at Lhasa's mercy again. Rapprochement with the Tibetan government, therefore, was remote, at best, as Lhasa would not even recognize Tseden Gombo as the true Panchen Lama, let alone compromise on other issues. And while the GMD had said they would assist them, they had not done so over the past twenty years and were no longer in any position to help vis-à-vis Lhasa. The new power in China was the CCP, so joining forces with them made the most sense, as they alone had the military power to make the Panchen's goal of returning to Tibet come to fruition. However, although they were known to be atheists and many felt they would destroy Buddhism, the CCP's unequivocal and repeated assertions that they will respect Tibetan religion and allow autonomy in minority areas, as well as the positive reports from Chongqing and Xining [about them after they took control there], helped to convince the Panchen Lama's side that they could work with the communists to achieve their ends.

---

[13] Goldstein 2007, 265–73.

> Consequently, in late August/early September 1949, the Panchen Lama sent [one of his top officials], Che Jigme, to meet with the PLA. He found them reasonable and linked his and the Panchen Lama's future to theirs. Soon after, a group headed by Zhou Renshan, chief of the United Front Work Department in Qinghai, went to Xiangrede to assist the Panchen Lama with financial and other problems that needed immediate attention. The Panchen Lama had now come der the wing of the Northwest Bureau of the CCP. Winning him over was one of the Northwest Bureau's important achievements in the CCP's liberation of Tibet.[14]

Following this, on 1 October 1949, the twelve-year-old Panchen Lama sent telegrams to Mao Zedong and Zhu De, congratulating them on the founding of the PRC and extending his support for the PLA/CCP's unification of China and its goal of liberating Tibet. The telegram to Mao said,

> Chairman Mao of Central People's Government and Commander-in-Chief Chu [Zhu] of Chinese People's Liberation Army, Peking:
>
> With superior wisdom and courage Your Excellences have completed the grand salvation of the country and the people. The success of your army has brought joy to the whole country. For generations in the past I have received kindness and favor from the country. During the past twenty years and more I have ceaselessly struggled for the territorial and sovereign integrity of Tibet [in China]. It is to be deeply regretted that I have had no success. I am now lingering in Chinghai [Qinghai] waiting for an order to return to Tibet. Fortunately, under the leadership of Your Excellences, the Northwest has now been liberated and the Central People's Government has been established. All those who are conscientious applaud with one accord. From now on, the realization of the democratic happiness of the people and the revival of the country are only questions of time, and it will not be long before Tibet is liberated. I sincerely present to Your Excellences on behalf of all the people in Tibet [our] respects and our heartfelt support.
>
> *Panchen 'O-erh-te-ni'*
> *1st October 1949*[15]

Eager to establish a strong relationship with the leaders of the new Chinese Central Government, the Panchen Lama also sent a congratulatory telegram to Peng Dehuai, the head of the NWB and the First Field Army, under whose authority Qinghai was, expressing even more strongly his support for the "liberation" of Tibet:

> Fortunately under the leadership of Your Excellency, the Northwest has been liberated and all the people on the border are united in their joy. From now on the realiza-

---

[14] Ibid., 273–74.

[15] British Foreign Office Records, FO371/83325, enclosure in Nanjing dispatch to the British Foreign Office, dated 27 December 1949. The enclosure was taken from the *New China Daily News*, Nanking, 25 November 1949.

> tion of the happiness of the people and revival of the country are only questions of time. Even the people in Tibet, who have for a long time been neglected, are holding out great hopes and anticipate a quick opportunity of resurrection. We sincerely beseech that you will lead your righteous troops to liberate Tibet, eradicate the traitorous elements, and rescue the people of Tibet.[16]

The rapid development of close ties between the Panchen Lama and the NWB raised a sensitive new issue regarding how the CCP should position itself in the conflict between the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama. The Panchen Lama's agenda placed it in clear opposition to the Tibetan government in Lhasa, and since the liberation of Tibet was yet to come, how the Communist Party managed the conflict could affect their relations with the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government.

The central government took a first step toward developing such a strategy in October 1949, when Li Weihan (then the Minister of the national United Front Work Department) instructed the Intelligence Department of the central government to send Yuan Xinhu and Yu Kai to set up a Qinghai Liaison Office in Xining with a mandate to investigate the history of the conflict between the two lamas and report their findings directly to the government.[17] While they were investigating this issue, the first direct communication from Mao Zedong to the Panchen Lama occurred on 23 November 1949. On that day, Mao and Zhu jointly responded to the Panchen Lama's telegram as follows:

> We were very happy to receive your telegram of October 1. The Tibetan people are patriotic and opposed to foreign aggression. They are dissatisfied with the policies of the GMD reactionary government and wish to become a member of the big family of a united, strong, and new China where all races cooperate on the basis of equality. The Central People's Government and the Chinese People's Liberation Army will undoubtedly satisfy this desire of the Tibetan people. We hope that the Master (Ch. xian sheng) [the Panchen Lama] and other patriotic Tibetans all over Tibet will work together and strive for the liberation of Tibet and for the unity of the Han and Tibetan people. It is hoped that you and all patriots in Tibet will in unity exert all your efforts in the struggle for the liberation of Tibet and [the] unity between the Chinese and Tibetan peoples.[18]

Two months later, on 31 January 1950, the Panchen Lama sent another telegram to Mao, this time calling for the prompt liberation of Tibet by the PLA. It also expressed his opposition to the Lhasa government's plan to send missions to Brit-

---

16. Ibid.

17. Fan Ming 1987, 5; Fan Ming, interview, Beijing, 1993.

18. British Foreign Office records, FO371/83325, quoted from *New China Daily News*, Nanking, 25 November 1949.

ain, the United States, and other countries to request assistance. The telegram left no doubts about the commitment of the Panchen Lama.

> It is recognized by the whole world that Tibet is the territory of China, and all the Tibetans think that they are one of the nationalities of China. The act of the Lhasa authorities today undermines the integrity of the national territory and sovereignty and runs against the will of the Tibetan people. We, on behalf of the Tibetan people, beseech you to rapidly send righteous troops to liberate Tibet, cleanse the reactionary elements, drive out the imperialist forces in Tibet, solidify the national defense in the southwest, and liberate the Tibetan people.[19]

By early 1950, therefore, the Panchen Lama and his officials had bet their future on the CCP liberating Tibet. The CCP, they believed, could and would return them to Tibet, but what their status would be vis-à-vis the Dalai Lama's government was still not clear. Having spent decades in exile, they now sought nothing less than an equal political status with Lhasa, but to attain this would require securing the backing of the leaders of the NWB, and through them, the Beijing leadership. Consequently, in the spring of 1950, Che Jigme asked the communist officials he was dealing with in Xining (in Qinghai) to arrange a direct meeting between himself and Fan Ming, who was then in Lanzhou.

Fan Ming was receptive to Che Jigme's views, since his own study of Tibetan history (from Chinese sources) had convinced him of the historical correctness of Che Jigme's position. He quickly became the Panchen's leading supporter within the party, advocating strongly the Front and Back Tibet approach. Fan Ming explained,

> In history, there was a "Front Tibet" [Ch. qian zang] and a "Back Tibet" [Ch. hou zang]. The Dalai's government was called Kashag and the Panchen's government was called Kanting. Those two did not have a relationship in which one belonged to the other. They were parallel structures. When Tibetans met they would say, "Just as the sun and the moon are in the sky, the Dalai and Panchen are on earth." . . . They were people under different rulers.[20]
>
> In the maps of China at that time [Qing Dynasty], you will see Front and Back Tibet. Tibet was not called Xizang [Tibet]. The term Xizang was used after liberation. In the past, Front Tibet belonged to the Dalai, and Back Tibet belonged to the Panchen [see map 4].[21]

Fan Ming also was convinced that unlike the Dalai Lama's lineage/line, the line of Panchen Lamas historically were friends of China and strong supporters of the view that Tibet is part of China. Again, he explained:

---

[19] Fan Ming 1987, 8–19.

[20] Fan Ming, interview, Beijing, 1993.

[21] Fan Ming, interview, Beijing, 1993. Although this distinction was used on some Qing maps, it was never real on the ground. The Panchen Lama's territory was always under the political authority of the Dalai Lama's government. For a longer discussion of this, see Goldstein 2007, 422–53.

> The Panchen's group always endorsed the unification of China. In history, the 5th Panchen Lama [Lobsang Yeshe, 1663–1737] endorsed the idea. . . . The 10th Panchen [1938–1989] also insisted on the unification of the motherland. Under any circumstances, the Panchen's group always insisted on unification and opposed Tibet separating from China.[22]

Similarly, on the modern political relationship between the Panchen and Dalai Lamas, Fan Ming said,

> After the Dalai's group drove the 9th Panchen away, of course they controlled both Front and Back Tibet. But legally and on the maps [Chinese] of the times, the Central Government [Chinese] did not acknowledge it. At this time, Chinese maps designated a Front and Back Tibet. . . . The Panchen's group, of course, when they were trying to restore their power in Tibet, were thinking of controlling Back Tibet. At that time, without question, the Panchen's group was thinking of controlling Back Tibet.[23]

Che Jigme met with Fan Ming on 26 April 1950 and, among other things, told him that he would like to go on behalf of the Panchen Lama to pay his respects to the leaders of the NWB in Xi'an. Fan Ming arranged that visit in mid May, and also helped Che Jigme secure Peng Dehuai's support in forwarding a written proposal on the future of Tibet to Mao Zedong.[24]

The Panchen Lama's proposal was titled: "A Plan concerning the Liberation of Tibet and the Organization of the Government." It began by recommending that the PLA forces simultaneously enter Tibet from four provinces—Yunnan, Xikang, Qinghai, and Xinjiang—but then it got to their essential concern, requesting that the Chinese government support the position that the Panchen Lama had always been autonomous from Lhasa and calling for the CCP to divide Tibet into Back and Front sections. It said,

> Because Tibet is territorially large with only one minority [living there], it has the conditions that make it suitable for regional autonomy. [Therefore it will be appropriate to] Organize one administrative region and then separate it into Front Tibet and Back Tibet."[25]

In addition, the proposal also put forward a number of concrete but far-reaching requests that will be discussed next. Peng Dehuai agreed; consequently, by May 1950 the NWB, and especially Fan Ming, had become the supporters and advocates of the Panchen Lama's claims and plans.

---

22. Fan Ming, interview, Beijing, 1993.

23. Ibid.

24. Fan Ming 1987, 6.

25. Quoted in Fan Ming 1987, 6. In Chinese: Xizang you zhengkuai de tudi, tongyi de minzu, shihe quyu zizhi de tiaojian, zuzhi yi xingzhengqu er jiang qian hou zang fenbie zizhi.

The next step in this relationship took place in early September 1950, when Mao met with Che Jigme in Beijing and accepted the requests made in his proposal. On 23 September, two weeks before the PLA forces attacked Chamdo, Mao sent instructions to all units involved in the "liberation" of Tibet, setting out the Central Committee's support for the Panchen Lama. It was titled, "Guidance Regarding the Issues and Requests Put Forward by the Panchen's Delegation." It said,

> The [Panchen Lama's] opinions about the political and religious organization of Tibet are very good. They are in the spirit of patriotism and unification (Ch. suo ti zhengjiao zuzhi fang'an de yijian hen hao, shi hehu aiguo yu tuanjie de jingshen). It's very good and very important that the Panchen's group is willing to cooperate with us. No matter what form the liberation of Tibet will take and how the Dalai's group will change, we must actively win over the Panchen's group and win over people who are influenced by them to cooperate with us.[26]

At the same time, Mao gave clear responses to the Panchen Lama's specific requests. The Panchen's requests are not available, but can be inferred from Mao's answers:

1. Determine the timing about the title [recognition] of the Panchen and make the decision according to the circumstances after the Tibetan delegation [of the Dalai Lama] comes to Beijing and negotiates.
2. It is determined that the Panchen will return to Tibet. The timing of his return to Tibet will be determined later according to the circumstances.
3. It is agreed that the Panchen can organize an ethnic [Tibetan] army unit of from 3,000 to 5,000 people, including in that a bodyguard unit for the Panchen. The PLA will send people who are capable and can build good relations between nationalities to help them with the organizing and training.
4. In order to help them train personnel and cadres, it is agreed to establish a subinstitute of the institute for nationalities or an independent training class near Kumbum Monastery.
5. It is agreed to establish a propaganda team.
6. It is agreed to provide a medical clinic.
7. The central government will help them establish an official consumers' cooperative.
8. It is agreed to give them a transmitter-receiver unit and provide a telegraph operator and decoder.
9. It is agreed to give them a truck.
10. It is agreed to establish four bureau offices [of the Panchen Lama] in Beijing, Chongqing, Xi'an and Xining.
11. Allocate 1,500 silver dollars per month for the personal expenses of the Panchen. The Panchen has 412 personnel and relatives and they will be given a total of 2,468 bags of wheat flour per month (each bag has 44 jin).

---

[26] Fan Ming 1987, 6.

12. Return the Xiangride pastureland [in Qinghai] to him. If, in the future, land reforms are instituted, deal with the pastureland in accordance with the government laws and regulations.
13. It is agreed that the government will send liaison officers to join the field headquarters of the Panchen.[27]

The Central Committee, therefore, gave the Panchen Lama much of what he wanted, including agreeing to his return to Tibet, the establishment of his own military force to protect himself against the Dalai Lama, and allowing him to operate his own bureau offices in key cities in inland China. However, the response did not publicly comment on his final status/recognition, instructing that this should wait until representatives of the Dalai Lama reach Beijing. And it also did not specify when he should return to Tibet, again saying this would be determined in accordance with conditions.

The reason for this is clear. As mentioned above, Mao had to walk a fine line between supporting the "progressive" Panchen Lama and having this support negatively impact the larger political goal of persuading the Dalai Lama to accept the "peaceful liberation" of Tibet. In particular, he did not want to do anything that might prompt the Dalai Lama and his officials to think that China's real plan was to use the Panchen Lama against him. Zhang Guohua, the commander of the Eighteenth Army Corps, later expressed this clearly, "We have to postpone the Panchen Lama's re-entry into Tibet for a while. If we don't delay it, the reactionaries will have an excuse to criticize us. So we will have discussions with the Dalai Lama regarding when the Panchen Lama should return."[28]

At about this time, Li Weihan's investigatory team in Qinghai finished its research and reported favorably for the Panchen Lama, concluding that Front and Back Tibet were historically valid categories that were equivalent to the political entities of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas. And significantly, it also recommended that the Eighteenth Army Corps (of the SWB) should manage Front Tibet (the Dalai Lama's realm) and the NWB army should take care of Back Tibet. If necessary, it suggested, two military regions (Ch. junqu) could also be established in Tibet.[29]

Consequently, at the time Chamdo was invaded in October 1950, China was strategically making plans for a Front and Back Tibet with the Panchen Lama and the NWB taking control of Back Tibet. Fan Ming recalls the way he was ordered to take the lead in this,

---

[27] Quoted in Fan Ming 1987, 6–7.

[28] Zhao Shenying 1998, 46.

[29] Jiangbian Jiacuo (Jambey Gyatso), interview, Beijing, 1993, H.0060.02.

> Peng Dehuai, Jia Tuofu, and Xu Liqing returned to Lanzhou from Xinjiang in late September 1950, and I went to meet them at the airport. Jia Tuofu told me, "Commander-in-Chief Peng has decided that you will be the secretary and mayor of Urumuqi [capital of Xinjiang]. You should get there within a week." So I immediately made plans to leave for Urumuqi. However, after a few days, Peng told me, "Don't go to Xinjiang. Be prepared to go to Tibet." He pointed at a map of Tibet and said, "Go to Tsang via Xining and Nagchu and take control of the Gampala Pass.[30] Cut the traffic between Ü and Tsang, and then go straight to Shigatse and liberate Tsang." He told me to speak with the Deputy Commander of the Northwest Military Command, Zhang Zongxun, for details.
>
> So I prepared to go to Tibet. Then in late October 1950, the Director of the Northwest Bureau's Political Department, Gan Siqi, told me, "You are not going to Tibet. Go with Commander-in-Chief Peng to "Resist America and Aid Korea." So I began to prepare to do this. A few days later, Deputy Commander Zhang Zongxun told me, "You won't be going to 'Resist America and Aid Korea.' Instead you will be in charge of leading the army into Tibet." They were sending me there because earlier I had done some nationality work.[31]

Regarding this, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued an important directive about Back Tibet on 9 November 1950:

> During the entire battle to liberate Tibet, the Northwest People's Liberation Army [the First Field Army] will undertake the task of entering Back Tibet and the Ali area [Far Western Tibet]. [Since] the Panchen's group has the deepest historical relationships in Back Tibet and still has great influence there, and [because] the work related to the Panchen belongs to the Northwest Bureau, Liu Bocheng [of the Southwest Bureau] suggested that the Northwest undertake the political task of taking over Back Tibet and the Ali area simultaneously. Therefore, the Northwest Bureau should immediately start the preparatory work.[32]

As a result of this, the NWB made preparations to send a cavalry division to Back Tibet with Sun Gong as its commander. Fan Ming would be the Secretary of the NWB's TWC (Ch. xizang gongwei)[33], and his Liaison Department would be in charge of the preparatory work.[34]

---

[30] This is the mountain pass located just south of the Tsangpo River that traditionally separated the Tibetan provinces of Ü and Tsang (Front and Back Tibet).

[31] Fan Ming 1987, 2–3.

[32] Cited in Fan Ming 1987, 24; and Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 9 November 1950.

[33] The Work Committee (Ch. gongwei) was the main administrative unit. Under it were a variety of offices such as the Organizational Department, Propaganda Department, United Front Department, Democratic Movement Department, Secretarial Office, General Office, Research Office, Youth Affairs Committee and Women's Committee. Also under the Work Committee were various work teams like the Xinhua News Agency, Cultural Work Team, Photography Team, Movie Team, Healthcare Office, Social Affairs Office and Liaison Office.

[34] Fan Ming 1987, 24.

The strategic decision of the Panchen Lama's administration to switch allegiance, therefore, had worked well. A year after their decision to link their future with that of the Chinese Communist Party, they had won the strong support of the powerful NWB and through them, Mao Zedong. Beijing had recognized the validity of the 10th Panchen Lama and agreed to return him to his realm. And significantly, they also accepted the Panchen's view that there would be two autonomous political entities, one under the Dalai Lama and one under the Panchen Lama, with each occupied by troops from a different bureau and army, the first under the SWB and the other under the NWB. As Fan Ming recalled, "At first, [the task of liberating Tibet] was divided. Everything was divided into "front" and "back" Tibet. [It was] After the two [Chinese] troops joined forces, [that] confrontation started."[35]

However, not everyone in the PLA agreed with this. When the 9 November telegram was sent to the SWB, Zhang Guohua and Tan Guansan, the two leaders of the Eighteenth Army Corps, disagreed with its thrust. By 14 December 1950, the SWB's own Tibet Work Committee held a joint meeting with the Eighteenth Army Corps' Party Committee in Ganzi (in Xikang/Kham) at which, among other topics, the issue of dividing Tibet into front and back was discussed. This meeting concluded that this would be a mistake. Some of the reasons they put forward were:

> 1. The [Tibetan] people will not like this and the reactionaries will use this separating into two units as a pretext to stir up trouble. The reason for this separation in the past was the different political power of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, but the religion is the same, so it is not good to separate the two.
> 2. The current economic dependency between front and back Tibet is great. Front Tibet depends on Shigatse for its grain supply, and the nomads in the north export their goods though Yadong, so there will be great problems if we separate Tibet into two parts.
> 3. From the standpoint of having diplomatic relations with India, Nepal and Bhutan, it is also not feasible to have two parts.[36]

The SWB had done its own research on the relationship between the two Tibetan lamas, and also had the firsthand knowledge of Phüntso Wangye, their high-level Tibetan cadre who had lived in Lhasa twice in the 1940s.[37] He told them that there had never really been a distinct Front and Back Tibet, and that the Dalai Lama's government ruled all of Tibet including Back Tibet. Consequently, when this meeting dispersed on 24 December (1950), it concluded that the front and back parts of Tibet should remain as one. The conclusions and criticisms from this meeting were sent as a report to the Central Committee.[38]

---

[35] Fan Ming, interview, Beijing, 1993, H.0230.01.

[36] Zhao Shenying 1998, 46; Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 14 December 1950, 20.

[37] For an autobiographical account of Phüntso Wangye's life and times, see Goldstein et al. 2004.

However, the Central Committee continued to follow the NWB's plans. In mid December, Fan Ming was sent to Xi'an to make a report. Xi Zhongxun, Deputy Chairman of the NWB, then sent a group of officials including Fan Ming to Beijing to make a report directly to the Central Committee.[39] They arrived in Beijing on 31 December 1950. Li Weihan met them on 3 January 1951 at the Beijing Hotel where they were staying, and he told Fan Ming to prepare an outline to report to the Central Committee. On 30 January 1951, Li Weihan met with Fan Ming, Wang Zhen, and Ya Hanzheng and reaffirmed the Front and Back Tibet policy:

> The Northwest's military task will be to cooperate with the Southwest, which will be the main force. It should be prepared to take over Back Tibet (Wang Zhen will send people into Ali from Xinjiang.).[40]

In addition, on 13 February 1951, the Central Military Commission in Beijing sent the NWB instructions on its work in liberating Tibet:

> 1. All of Tibet must be liberated this year. The Northwest must complete all the preparatory work for the entrance into Tibet before the end of March. No delay is allowed.
> 2. It is decided that 1,500 people (including the guard troops for the Northwest's Work Committee), 1,000 relatives (who will go to Tibet next year), and 1,500 people from the Panchen's group (including his guards), totaling four thousand people and eight thousand mules and horses, will enter Tibet in batches within two years.
> 3. All the conditions that the Central Committee has promised the Panchen's Group must be rapidly and completely realized. The Northwest Military Command is put in charge of equipping the Panchen's bodyguard troops with cadres, a hospital, and a radio broadcast station.[41]

So at this point in time, in late January/early February, the Central Committee clearly was still proceeding with the plan for the NWB to take control of Back Tibet.

Fan Ming returned to Xi'an from Beijing in mid February and reported to the Northwest Bureau. It was decided that the Tibet Work Committee of the NWB would consist of Fan Ming, Ya Hanzhang, Zhang Jun, Wu Kaizhang, Sun Diancai,

---

38. Zhao 1998, 46. Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 14 December 1950, 20.

39. The group included Fan Ming, Fu Sheng, and Liu Shiyuan (of the Liaison Department), Wang Feng (director of the United Front Work Department), and Jiang Ping.

40. Fan Ming 1987, 26.

41. Fan Ming 1987, 28–29; and Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 13 February 1951.

and Sun Yijun. Fan Ming would be the first secretary. Later, Zhang Jun could not go to Tibet and Mu Shengzhong replaced him. A few weeks later, on 27 February, instructions from the Central Committee appointed Fan Ming as the "representative" of the NWB to the Panchen Lama. He was responsible for escorting the Panchen Lama to Tibet.[42]

THE PANCHEN LAMA IN BEIJING

For Fan Ming, everything had gone so well that he decided the time was right to further solidify the situation by having the Panchen Lama travel to Beijing to meet Mao and the other leaders of China in person. On 27 March 1951, the Panchen Lama (through Fan Ming) sent a telegram to Mao asking for a meeting, and two weeks later, on 7 April, Lin Boqu, the General Secretary of the Central Committee, replied affirmatively. Two days later Fan Ming went to Kumbum Monastery to discuss the details for this trip with the Panchen Lama's top officials. They were pleased, but at the same time were extremely concerned about the protocol for the meeting. They feared that if the current Panchen Lama was treated less respectfully than his predecessors, it would send the wrong message to the Dalai Lama's people and have negative consequences for the future. Consequently, on 12 April, Fan Ming sent a telegram to the NWB and the Central Committee raising this concern. The Central Committee quickly agreed that everything would be done the same as it had been done for the previous (9th) Panchen Lama.

A week later, on 19 April, Fan Ming, the Panchen Lama and the Panchen's entourage, left Kumbum Monastery for Lanzhou. From there they flew to Xi'an and then Beijing. As he had promised, Fan Ming organized the journey precisely according to the etiquette done for previous Panchen Lamas.[43]

While these events were unfolding, the deadlock over negotiations with the Tibetan government broke, and at the end of January 1951, Tibetan government representatives met with Ambassador Yuan in New Delhi and agreed to send a delegation to Beijing for negotiations. This delegation left Yadong in late March.[44] With the Dalai Lama's representatives coming to Beijing to negotiate an agreement, Mao and the Central Committee now seriously assessed how to maximize the likelihood of success in the upcoming negotiations and reassessed the Panchen-Dalai conflict. As a result, at some point in March or April, Mao and his main advisor on Tibet, Li Weihan, moved closer to the SWB's view that creating a distinct Front and Back Tibet was not historically accurate and it would be a strategic mistake for the CCP to create one now. Mao now decided that the Dalai Lama was the most important figure in Tibet and was the key to successfully incorporating Tibet, so he decided to be careful not to inadvertently let support for the Panchen Lama negatively influence winning over the Dalai Lama.

---

[42] Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 27 February 1951. Ya Hanzhan was appointed as a deputy representative.

[43] Fan Ming 1987, 37.

[44] The head of this delegation, Ngabö, arrived in Beijing on 22 April 1951, a few days before the Panchen Lama.

Fan Ming only learned of this shift when the Panchen Lama met Mao in Beijing:

> One thing planned at the time was to get the Panchen to present a Tibetan ceremonial scarf to Chairman Mao at Tiananmen on May 1st, Labor Day, so that the whole world could see that the Panchen Lama was the first Tibetan to present such a scarf to Chairman Mao. It was very meaningful. The person who accepted the scarf for Chairman Mao was Li Weihan, and I was right beside Chairman Mao. . . . I escorted the Panchen when he met with Chairman Mao. . . . After Mao inspected the troops at Tiananmen, he had his first conversation with the Panchen. Premier Zhou, Li Weihan, myself, Che Jigme, and the Panchen Lama were present. During the conversation, Chairman Mao praised the Panchen's group. At the same time . . . he made a key point that all nationalities in China should be united and *all nationalities should be united internally.* We were unlike the GMD who tried to win over one group and in the meantime tried to hit another group. *So at that time we asked the Panchen to cooperate with the Central Committee in winning over the Dalai Lama. . . .*
>
> This was when the Central Committee decided that Tibet should be a unified Tibet, not an entity divided into Front and Back Tibet. This was the first time such a decision was made. Tibetans should unite together internally and the Dalai and Panchen should unite together. The Central Committee would provide unified leadership to the whole Tibet.[45]

Consequently, by the time that negotiations began in Beijing, Mao and the Central Committee had shifted to a strategy in which the interests of Dalai Lama were more important than those of the Panchen Lama. Mao had personally accepted the Qinghai boy as the authentic Panchen Lama and was committed to assist him to return to Tibet and resume his territories and authority, but winning over the Dalai Lama was now the main priority. and the two lamas were to cooperate in a unified Tibet.

The Chinese side got their first glimpse of how difficult this would be when the Tibetan negotiators refused to participate in a welcoming ceremony for the Panchen Lama, saying they did not recognize Tseden Gombo as the genuine incarnation of the previous Panchen Lama. Taklha, the Chinese language translator for the Tibetan delegation (and the Dalai Lama's brother-in-law), recalled what happened when the Panchen Rinpoche arrived in Beijing on 27 April:

---

[45] Fan Ming, interview, Beijing, 1993, H.0230.01 (emphasis added).

> The day after we arrived at Beijing, we were told that the Panchen Lama will arrive the next day and that all of us have to go to welcome him at the Railway Station. . . . At that time, Ngabö and all of us discussed this, saying, "We [the Tibetan Government] haven't recognized the Panchen Lama. According to the policy of the Tibetan Government, there are [still] three candidates—two in Tibet and one in Amdo, and this candidate [the Amdo one] cannot be recognized until he goes to Tibet [for examination]."
>
> However, the Chinese insisted, saying that we have to go to welcome him. Ngabö and we discussed this and then decided that Ngabö and Kheme, the [chief] representatives, will not go to welcome the Panchen Lama, but the three of us, Sambo, Sandu Rinchen, and me [one junior official and the two translators] will go to welcome him. This was to show that we did not accept the Panchen Lama.[46]

Sambo also recalled that day,

> A. The Chinese told us to go and receive him at the railway station, but at that time we had yet to accept and recognize him as the real reincarnation of the Panchen Rinpoche. We discussed this among ourselves and we decided that only I should go to receive him.[47]
>
> Q. Did Ngabö give you instructions about how to receive him and how to behave to him?
>
> A. There were no instructions, but I acted as if I was meeting an old friend. I did not offer him a scarf. We also did not shake hands. The Chinese actually wanted me to go in full official dress, but Ngabö didn't say anything about doing this so I went wearing an ordinary gown. Most probably the Panchen Lama thought that I was just an ordinary Tibetan.[48]

During the negotiations, the Chinese set out to pressure the Tibetan government to recognize the legitimacy of this Panchen Lama. Sambo recalled:

> A few days later, after the talks began on 2 May, the Chinese side raised this issue when Li Weihan asked Ngabö what special instructions he had received regarding the Panchen Lama. When Ngabö told him that he had none, Li said, "How is that possible, because it is one of the most important concerns and events for Tibetans?" Ngabö agreed but told him again that he didn't have any instructions. Then Li asked him: "Would you accept him as the real Panchen Rimpoche?" Ngabö said that he cannot accept anyone as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama and explained how at present there are two or three candidates for the position of Panchen Lama in Lhasa. He went on to explain that ultimately a divination (Tib. thukdam) would be done to select the correct person. To this Li replied that the Central Government has

---

[46] Taklha, Phüntso Tashi, interview, England, 1997, H.0037.05. See also Stag lha (Taklha) 1995, 2:40.

[47] He means that he was the only full member of the negotiating team to go, the other two (Taklha and Sandu Rinchen) were the delegation's translators.

[48] Sambo, interview, India, 1981, H.0205.20.

> already accepted this one as the true incarnation, meaning that Ngabö had to support them in this.
>
> Ngabö then told them, "If you have accepted him that is good, but we have not accepted him." The Chinese were polite and diplomatic and discussions on this went on for about six or seven days. The Chinese would put forward new arguments, trying to convince the Tibetans to accept Gombo Tseden, the Qinghai boy, as the Panchen Rinpoche, but the Tibetan side absolutely refused.[49] Finally the Chinese asked Ngabö to please accept him to save the face of Mao and the Central Government. The Chinese side would not go on with the negotiations unless this was settled, so ultimately the Tibetan team sent a telegram to the Dalai Lama in Yadong asking for instructions. The telegram said that if you don't recognize the Qinghai boy as the Panchen Lama, it will harm the negotiations. A response came quickly from the Dalai Lama saying that after doing divination it has been determined that the Panchen Lama in Beijing is the true incarnation of the 9th Panchen Lama.[50]

This response was welcomed by the delegation, since it was beginning to look as if the negotiations would break down. In accordance with Tibetan customs, the next day the Tibetan delegation went to visit the Panchen Lama and showed him the proper respect, prostrating three times and giving him the "mendredensum" offering.[51]

For the Chinese and the Panchen Lama, of course, recognition was only one issue to be resolved. Equally critical was the Tibetan government's acceptance of the return of the Panchen Lama to Tibet and the restoration of his control over his territories. In turn, that required resolving the dispute over the relative authority between the two. This provoked a terrible argument, as Ngabö recalled:

> After it was decided to sign the Seventeen-Point Agreement and the seven-point [secret] codicil to the Agreement, a new matter was put forward. They said, "Although the matter between the Central Committee and the Local Tibetan Government has been settled, now we have to settle an internal matter in Tibet. The 9th Panchen Lama and the 13th Dalai Lama didn't get along well so the 9th Panchen Lama had to go to China. He passed away in Jyekundo and the present 10th Panchen Lama was recognized. If we do not settle the important issues between the Panchen's Administrative Council and the Local [Tibetan] Government, it will not be okay, even if the matter between the Central Government and the Local Tibetan Government would be settled."
>
> We were not given orders to settle this matter, and the contradiction between the Local Tibetan Government and the Panchen's Administrative Council was not so

---

[49] These arguments were being developed by Fan Ming and Che Jigme. For example, they showed Ngabö the photo of the Dalai Lama's Chongqing bureau chief attending the Panchen Lama's inauguration ceremony.

[50] Sambo, interview, India, 1981, H.0205.20. Taklha, who was present, also reports this in an interview, India, 1992, H.0037.03. See also Stag lha (Taklha) 1995, 2:40–44.

[51] Taklha Phüntso Tashi, interview, India, 1992, H.0037.03; Sambo, interview, India, 1981, H.0205.20.

small an issue, so we were not in a position [to be involved in this matter.] Therefore, we insisted that we cannot accept this. We were ordered to negotiate with the Central Government for a peaceful agreement, we were not given an order to settle the matter between the Local Government and the Panchen's Administrative Council. Please do not talk to us about this matter. You can talk about this separately later on. All of us insisted on saying that.

The delegation of the Central Committee, however, kept insisting, saying, "That will not be okay. You people have to settle this matter. So we told them, "We will definitely not accept this as we do not have orders concerning this, and we are not in a position to interfere in this matter."

At that moment, the head of the Central Committee's delegation, Li Weihan, said, "If you do not settle this internal matter we will not be able to sign the Agreement between the Central Government and the Local Government." We responded, "If this is the case, it does not make any difference to us (Tib. khyebar mindu). We can leave the Agreement. We do not need to sign the Agreement. We are not going to meddle in this matter. If the Government insists on saying that we have to settle the matter between the Local Government and the Panchen's Administrative Council, we cannot do that, because we were not ordered to deal with it. If you continue to insist on that, we don't need to sign the Agreement; we can tear it up.[52]

[Ngabö then added that if the negotiations are to end] the Central Government should take responsibility and send Kheme, Sambo, and the other delegates safely back to Tibet. I [Ngabö] was appointed as a leader of the Chamdo Liberation Committee, so I kind of belong to Chamdo and I can stay in Chamdo. I don't need to go back to Tibet. I can stay in Beijing temporarily if you say so. I told the four delegation members, "You people should go back to Tibet. I will stay in Beijing or in Chamdo. You were sent purposely [to negotiate], so the Central Government will take the responsibility to send you safely to Tibet." So the Agreement . . . on which we had been negotiating for several days was [figuratively] torn up.

After two or three days, Song Zhiyuan, a member of the Central Government's delegation, said that he wanted to see me. I told him okay. At that time, the interpreter was Phünwang. We were staying in the Beijing Hotel, so we met in the hotel at about 9 A.M. The other delegates were not present; only the two of us negotiated.

At that time, the Panchen Lama was about 12–13 years old, so probably this was a request made by his attendants or the Panchen Lama's Administrative Council, or perhaps it was the idea of the Central Committee. But anyway, they were talking about separating Ü and Tsang and saying the territories beyond [south of] the Gambala Pass should belong to the Panchen Lama's Administrative Council, and the territories beyond it [north] to the Local Government [the Tibetan government].

I told them that will not be okay. No matter how many times you tell me about it, I will not accept it. This is a custom confirmed from ancient times so it will not be okay for you to put forward some kind of new policies and new conditions.

---

52. Ngabö said that it was Kheme Dzasa who said if that is the case, then go ahead and tear it up (interview, Beijing, 1989, H.0040.02).

> We were talking to each other like this until noon, when we had our lunch and took a rest. We started talking again at 2–3 P.M. At that time, we did not accept their views, and they were also not accepting ours. So we had a disagreement and we were supposed to meet the next day. However, at about 7 P.M., Song Zhiyuan said, "I have an idea about how to write this in the Agreement. [We should write] that we will not interfere with the rank and power held respectively when the 13th Dalai Lama and the 9th Panchen Lama were getting along well. I told him . . . it is proper to say that . . . so I will accept this. But, if you put forward some new policies that say more than that, I will not accept it. Then he [Song Zhiyuan] said, that will be okay. I was sent by the delegation of the Central Committee as their representative. Now, that the two of us have agreed about this, we can continue the negotiations.[53]

So in the end, the Chinese side was able to induce the Tibetan government to recognize the 10th Panchen Lama, accept his return, and agree to vague language in the Seventeen-Point Agreement that specified that the Panchen Lama and his followers could assume his previous rights and powers. The two points in the Seventeen-Point Agreement dealing with this said:

> Point 5: The established status, functions, and powers of the Panchen Ngoerhtehni shall be maintained.
>
> Point 6: By established status, functions, and powers of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Ngoerhtehni are meant the status, functions, and powers of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and the Ninth Panchen Ngoerhtehni when they were in friendly and amicable relations with each other.[54]

Fan Ming, who was there advising the Chinese delegation, did not get everything he had sought, but it was still a major victory for the Panchen Lama's side. The new Panchen Lama got recognized by the Dalai Lama and would now be able to return on what, to them, seemed like their own terms, since they would be returning for the first time with their own troops, a Bodyguard Regiment. However, the negotiations were unable to clarify any of the issues that had caused the 9th Panchen Lama to flee, and both sides had to accept putting off discussions on these until a future time. It would be actually be years before all the details of those respective rights were mutually accepted.[55]

As the Panchen Lama and his officials/entourage had hoped in 1949, they victoriously returned to Tibet in March 1952, escorted by troops and officials from Fan Ming's NWB. The NWB and the Panchen Lama, therefore, had an intimate relationship with the Panchen Lama and his administration long before the Panchen Lama actually returned to his seat of power in Tibet, and remained his strongest ally and supporter after that, specifically through the person of Fan Ming.

---

[53] Ngabö, interview, Beijing, 1989, H.0040.03.

[54] Goldstein 1989, 766.

[55] Goldstein 2007, 290. For a detailed discussion of this dispute and its aftermath, see Goldstein 1989, 110–38 and 253–309; and Goldstein 2007, 265–300.

Despite Fan Ming's previous setbacks in 1951 regarding the leadership of the TWC, Fan Ming's notion of a Panchen-centric Tibet policy led him to try to enhance the position and stature of the Panchen Lama in 1952, by again trying to convince Beijing that the Panchen Lama's home area in southwestern Tibet (Tib. tsang) should be treated with parity as a political and administrative unit equal to that of the Dalai Lama. Specifically, Fan Ming tried to persuade Beijing to recognize the Panchen Lama as the head of an *autonomous region,* reusing as evidence the old Qing Dynasty concepts of a Front and Back Tibet that he had used with Beijing in 1950.

Fan Ming was convinced that if parity between them could be institutionalized now, he could persuade the Panchen Lama and his officials to unilaterally start democratic reforms in their own region, and, if they were a separate autonomous entity, they could do this without the Dalai Lama's agreement. Fan Ming also was convinced that once the manorial estate system with its bound miser and corvée taxes was eliminated on the estates in the Panchen Lama's areas, the peasants in the Dalai Lama's region would demand the same reforms, and the clamor would be too loud for the Dalai Lama to refuse, so he would have to comply. Tibet, therefore, could implement land reforms quickly!

Zhang Guohua, Tan Guansan, and Zhang Jingwu, however, strongly disagreed with Fan Ming and insisted that the historical precedent was that the Dalai Lama ruled all of Tibet and to try to change that would create enormous ill-will and conflict. They argued that the best way to incorporate Tibet into the PRC for the long term was to work slowly and cautiously and allow the Dalai Lama to continue to administer Tibet with his own officials and laws for some time to come, namely, until they felt ready to accept reforms. In other words, they were committed to implementing Mao's Gradualist policy and working in partnership with the Dalai Lama. Because of this internal impasse, Fan Ming, on his own, sent a report/request about this to Mao Zedong. Mao finally intervened and had Deng Xiaoping summon the main figures from the TWC to Beijing in 1953 for a meeting about this, with the aim of getting everyone in the TWC, especially Fan Ming, to follow his Gradualist policy.

Li Zuomin, a Chinese cadre in the TWC, recalled that meeting.

> Then finally . . . in 1953, the Central Committee, out of desperation, called them to Beijing to settle the issue before the Central Committee.
>
> Q. This was the so-called Panmunjom Meeting in Beijing, right?[56]
>
> A. Yes. At that time, Fan Ming, Ya Hanzhang, and Mu Shenzhong from the Northwest came to the meeting, and on the other side [from the Southwest] there

---

[56] Panmunjom was the site of the contentious Korean War Armistice Commission negotiations. The Armistice was signed on 27 July 1953.

> were Zhang Guohua and Wang Qimei. Tan Guansan didn't come. . . . They met . . . for fifty-nine days over almost a three-month period, but [still] couldn't reach a mutually agreed upon resolution. . . . Finally, in June-July [1954], at the time that the Fourth Plenary Session of the Seventh Central Committee Assembly of the CCP was being held, there was a resolution there called, "The resolution on having unity and friendship in the Party" whose purpose was [to deal with] an anti-Party group within the CCP that consisted of Gao Gang, et cetera—three people. They were destroyed in order to strengthen the unity inside the Party.
>
> He [Deng Xiaoping] distributed this resolution [at the TWC representatives' meeting in Beijing] and told them to study it for two days. They [Fan and his NWB colleagues] got scared [thinking that they too might be labeled as an anti-party group] and yielded [agreed to the primacy of the Dalai Lama over the Panchen Lama], so the matter was finally settled. Fan Ming must have been angry, because he said that he was not going back to Tibet, but the Central Committee persuaded him to change his mind and sent him back so as not to further provoke the NWB, whose powerful head, Peng Dehuai, was the General who had been in command of the PLA forces in the Korean War.[57]

Despite this rejection of his view and plans, Fan Ming continued to try to implement his approach and start reforms in Tibet quickly, and he almost succeeded when he ended up in control of the TWC after Zhang Jingwu and Zhang Guohua both went to Beijing in June 1956. As mentioned in chapter 2, Fan Ming took this opportunity to start to implement trial democratic reforms;[58] he quickly recruited thousands of new Han cadres from inland China to help implement the full land reforms, which he planned to start in 1957. At the same time, he also recruited many thousands of new Tibetan cadres and party members. This came to be called the "Great Expansion" (Ch. da fazhan). However, when Mao and the Central Committee learned of this, they sent clear instructions to the TWC in September 1956, calling for no reforms at this time. Fan Ming, however, continued his preparations.

Fan Ming's preparations for reforms in Tibet created fear and anger among the Tibetan elite, including the Dalai Lama, since it seemed that the Chinese were now going to start to transform Tibet as had been done in Sichuan. So in March 1957 Mao took decisive action to stop Fan Ming. He ordered Deng Xiaoping to convene another major meeting in Beijing with the top TWC officials to settle the issue of China's Tibet policy in general and democratic reforms in particular. The real aim of this meeting was to secure face-to-face agreement from Fan Ming and the others allied with him for a new campaign called the "Great Contraction" (Ch. da shousuo). The Great Contraction required that the Han cadres recruited by Fan

---

57. Li Zuomin, interview, Beijing, 2011, H.0053.06. This phase of the conflict and the meeting is discussed in detail in Goldstein 2007, 422–53.

58. See Goldstein 2007, 318–25 for an example of a trial reform conducted near Lhasa.

Ming the previous year would be repatriated at once, and the number of ethnic Tibetan cadres and party members had to be vastly reduced. In addition, there would be *no* democratic reforms for the next six or eleven years and possibly even longer in Tibet, so the Dalai Lama would continue to administer Tibet internally via his government.[59]

Fan Ming was furious about this, since he believed the Gradualist policy was destabilizing Tibet, so he wrote a letter to Mao Zedong arguing for his views, but it was to no avail, and he ultimately had no choice but to agree to the Great Contraction. He returned to Tibet in May 1957, continuing as one of the top four leaders in the TWC but having to watch while his rival Zhang Guohua quickly reversed his Great Expansion work by replacing it with Mao's Great Contraction. Fan Ming, however, remained even more firmly convinced that his own views were correct and that Zhang Guohua and Deng Xiaoping were making a terrible error. He commented on this in an interview.

> After the Dalai came back [from India in April 1957], he pretended that he was a nice guy. He pretended that when he was in India, all the bad things were actually done by those Tibetans in exile who were living in India, but he was a pathetic guy. He was used as a puppet. . . . In fact, when he came back he was going to organize a big rebellion. However, on the surface, he pretended he was a nice person. He repeated those things he said in Beijing [in 1954–55], that he loved the motherland, et cetera, and his sweet words once again fooled our comrades Zhang Guohua and others. They fell for his tricks again.[60]

Fan Ming, therefore, felt compelled to do something, so on 1 September 1957, he sent another letter to Beijing, this time to Deng Xiaoping rather than to Mao. In it he reported that the pro-independence separatists and reactionary elements in Tibet had become even more rampant after the Great Contraction. Rather than the Great Contraction improving the situation as a result of stopping all the preparatory work for reforms, it was damaging the situation. In addition, he said that the battle readiness/capacity of the PLA in Tibet had been diminished and could not be compared to the battle effectiveness that existed when they first entered Tibet.[61]

Interestingly, Fan did not send the letter directly to Beijing, but gave it to Zhang Guohua, the head of the TWC. Zhang Guohua looked at it and made no comment about its contents, and then sent a cadre to hand-carry it to Deng Xiaoping. According to Fan Ming, when Deng read the report he was furious and immediately called Zhang Jingwu and Wang Feng [a senior official in Beijing] and told them that Fan Ming was again making trouble and was opposing him. Deng told them, "The last time, he wrote to Chairmen Mao to oppose me and this time he wrote directly [to me] to oppose me. How can this continue?"[62]

---

[59] See chapter 2 in this volume for more detail and Goldstein 2014, 306–34 and 445–66 for a full analysis.

[60] Fan Ming, interview, Beijing, 1993, H.0230.03.

[61] Fan Ming 2009, 373–74.

Fan Ming's September letter to Deng appears to have been the precipitating factor in the decision to throw Fan Ming into the Rectification Campaign as a target. Fan Ming was so confident in his own judgment that he deluded himself into thinking that he could persuade Deng Xiaoping that he was right. By sending this letter after the issue had been decisively settled five months earlier at the Beijing meeting, Fan Ming demonstrated that he was not going to give up his opposition to the official party line on Tibet and his view that Zhang Guohua and Zhang Jingwu (and Deng Xiaoping) were wrong.[63] It was at this point that it was decided to bring him down using the framework of the Rectification Campaign.

The campaign to rectify work within the party in Tibet occurred in parallel with the Rectification Campaign in the rest of China. In November 1957, the TWC decided to carry out rectification of the work in the Tibet organizations starting in 1958, and on 17 December [1957], it issued instructions for the campaign called, "The Instructions for the Rectification of Working Style within the Party and the Socialism Education in the Society." Zhang Xiangming, one of the senior cadres in the TWC, recalled that Fan Ming was initially running the rectification campaign in Lhasa,

> At the beginning of 1958, during the rectification, Zhang Guohua and Zhang Jingwu were in Beijing. The rectification work was taken charge of by Fan Ming. He was active. I remember that he went to every department every day, especially the newspaper office, and when he came back to the office, he would tell us about new problems or about some poisonous people [Ch. du cao] that he had identified from somewhere.[64]

However, in March 1958, Zhang Guohua and Zhang Jingwu returned to Lhasa and took over the campaign and changed its direction. Zhang Xiangming recalled, "[After they returned] Fan Ming changed from the person in charge of the rectification campaign, to the target of the rectification."[65]

Fan Ming has said that initially he had no inkling that he was going to become the campaign's main target and would end up being found guilty of being Tibet's greatest "rightist."

> On 21 January 1958, I went to dinner at the Secretariat cafeteria after work. I suddenly realized that I was the only one who was having dinner in the cafeteria. I did not see

---

[62] Ibid., 374.

[63] Fan Ming did not want to criticize Mao, so he blamed what were Mao's policies on Deng Xiaoping and the two Zhangs.

[64] Zhang Xiangming n.d., 71–72.

[65] Ibid., 72.

> Zhang Jingwu and Zhou Renshan, so I asked the waiter why, and he replied that Jingwu and Renshan had gone to the Military Headquarters. I felt strange. Since I was the first chair of the political commissars of the Tibet Military Headquarters while Zhou Renshan did not have any position in the Military Headquarters, I wondered why wasn't I among the people who went to the military headquarters for the meeting?
>
> Later, I learned that after they sent the reports concerning the rectifying work [in Tibet] to the Central Committee, the Central Committee did not reply to the TWC [where Fan Ming would have access to it], but instead replied to the Military Headquarters in the form of a telegram, which designated a specific translator who was to be used [for the decoding]. This telegram asked Zhang Jingwu and Zhang Guohua to rush to Beijing overnight so they could get instructions face-to-face. They left in the afternoon, telling us that they were going to attend a meeting of the Military Commission in Beijing. I didn't know when they left, because they left without notifying me. Their arrangements for the work in the TWC to be done while they were gone was also kept secret from me. According to the conventions in the past, when those two were absent from Tibet, I should have been in charge of the work of the TWC. However, before they left, they secretly arranged for Tan Guansan and Zhou Renshan to preside over the work of the TWC as well as the rectification campaign work. . . . Although in my heart I was angry about this unusual phenomenon, I was still busy with affairs as usual and arranged my work as normal.[66]

But as soon as Zhang Jingwu and Zhang Guohua returned from Beijing, Fan got his first inkling that he was in danger. He recalled,

> Zhang Jingwu and Zhang Guohua returned on March 14 [1958]. The atmosphere at once got tense. Those who returned to Lhasa in the same plane with them included Yang Gang, Liang Feng [Fan's wife] and Fan Jinzhen. When their flight passed through Golmud, they also took Mu Shengzhong on the plane and all came together. I had heard that Zhang Jingwu had decided not to come back to Tibet and had been given another position [in Beijing], so I wondered why he was now returning together with his wife Yang Gang? My wife Liang Feng had just returned to mainland China not long ago, so I also wondered why she came back in the same plane without notifying me? These signs indicated that there might be some trouble. When I asked Liang Feng what was happening, she said that when she was in Beijing, she was told by Wang Feng that the two Zhangs were going to make you suffer when they returned to Tibet, and he asked that you should not be stubborn. . . .
>
> They named me as a rightist as soon as they got off their horses.[67] However, it was hard to criticize me at the meetings, so they criticized and denounced me through my newly written . . . [novel] *The New Story of the Journey to the West* [Ch. xin xiyouji].[68]

---

66. Fan Ming 2009, 379.
67. His label as a rightist was not removed until 1980. Fan Ming 2009, 520–21.
68. Fan Ming 2009, 379–81.

Fan Ming says that he first got the idea to write a novel about Tibet in the spring of 1953 when he returned to attend a Party Congress in Beijing and happened to read a translation of a Russian novel called *Alitai Went to the Hills* [Ch. Alitai dao shanli qu].[69] Fan said that when he talked about the book, some cadres who knew about Tibet, such as Peng Dehuai, Li Weihan, and Zhang Desheng, encouraged him to write a novel that reflected the ethnic policies of the party in Tibet. He recalled that Peng Dehuai used to say to him that "if a person who is able to write did not express and summarize the stories and the experiences of the heroes among the masses in written format, this reflected a lack of having the viewpoint of the masses." Fan Ming, therefore, thought about writing such a novel on Tibet and began collecting materials for it over the years. However, he said that he did not get the time to start work on it until 1 December 1957, when he began writing the initial draft of an outline for the book.[70]

Once he started writing, he needed help copying drafts, editing, and proofreading, so he recruited a small group of three trusted cadres to assist him: his secretary Wu Jianli, his lover Huang Lin,[71] and Li Zongqing, a college graduate from the Tibetan Studies program at Beijing's Central Nationality College who had become good friends with Wu Jianli while they were in Kangding (Tartsedo, Sichuan). Li's husband, Liu Zhaogong, moreover, had been brought to Tibet from the northwest by Fan Ming. Fan and these three made what was called a "four-person gentlemen's agreement" [Ch. sijunzi xieding] to help Fan on the project and not reveal what he was writing. Zhang Xiangming recalled that they used to get together in the meeting room downstairs in Fan Ming's house for discussions and so forth. Although all the writing was done by Fan Ming, others in the TWC knew that they were working on a novel, but the content of the novel was kept strictly secret.[72] Fan finished the initial draft by the end of January 1958.

When Zhang Jingwu and Zhang Guohua came back from Beijing, they were looking for materials they could use to bring down Fan Ming. They soon found what they needed, when one night, Li Zongqing's husband went to see Zhang Jingwu and reported that the novel Fan Ming was writing contained serious political problems. He said that his wife (Li Zongqing) had been given a copy of a file Fan Ming had written called the "characters' list" (Ch. renwuzhi) in which each character was introduced in detail with their histories and the political characteristics that would be presented in the novel. When Li Zongqing read this, she got frightened, because the characters were thinly disguised caricatures of the leaders of Tibet, and they were being portrayed very disparagingly, except for the one character who obviously represented Fan Ming.[73]

---

[69] This translation of this Soviet novel was published in Shanghai in 1951.

[70] Fan Ming 2009, 381.

[71] Huang Lin had been having an affair with Fan Ming since they marched into Tibet from the northwest. Their relationship became a public secret after they came to Lhasa, and Fan Ming's wife Liang Feng knew about it. At that time, Huang Lin was married to a young man working in United Front Work Department. That young man also knew about the romantic relationship between Fan Ming and Huang Lin, but in order to keep Huang Lin, he didn't do anything about it (Zhang Xianming 2006, 72).

[72] Zhang Xiangming 2006, 72.

Zhang Xiangming further clarified,

> Fan Ming had crafted unfavorably the characters in the novel to resemble the leading officials working in Tibet, including Zhang Jingwu, Zhang Guohua, Ya Hanzhang, Wang Qimei, Li Jue, and so forth. . . . It was pretty clear which one was Zhang Jingwu and which one was Zhang Guohua. Although he made up names, it was very obvious who each character referred to was in the real world. . . . In the character list, Ya Hanzhang was called Ya Hanjian, and the character list cast him as a villain and a careerist. Wang Qimei was called Wang Shiwei in the book. We all knew that Wang Shiwei was a counterrevolutionary and a dissident during the Yanan rectification movement who was later executed by shooting. So Fan Ming used this man's name for Wang Qimei. . . . Zhang Guohua was called Chang Zizheng, which means "always thinking oneself is right." . . . Fan Ming called himself Huang Hai ("Yellow Sea") in the book. Of course, Huang Hai was the hero, and the name meant that he was generous like the sea. In short, people could see that in his "characters list" every one of us was a villain and only he was right.[74]

Li Zongqing, therefore, decided it was too dangerous for her not to say something, so she asked her husband to report the situation to Zhang Jingwu, even though she no longer had the character file, which Fan Ming had taken back and burned. When Zhang Jingwu heard this, he realized at once that he now had his opportunity, as this was obviously an anti-party activity that was damaging to the harmony within the party, so he asked Li Zongqing to expose this issue to the public by putting up a poster about the novel, which she did the next day. It caused an uproar.[75]

After the poster appeared, some of the TWC leaders called for an immediate "rectification meeting" to be presided over by Zhang Jingwu, and it arrested (detained) both Fan Ming and his wife Liang Feng.

THE RECTIFICATION MEETING

Zhang Xiangming explained what happened at the meeting:

> The meeting started by announcing that the Central Committee had agreed that Fan Ming should be suspended from all his duties and his activities, documents, diaries,

---

[73] Ibid., 72–74.

[74] Ibid., 73–74.

[75] Ibid., 73.

letters, and manuscripts should be confiscated and investigated. Fan Ming was explicitly warned not to transfer or destroy any of those materials. At the same time, two teams were created. One was headed by Zhang Xiangming and included Zhang Guohua's secretary and Zhou Renshan's secretary. It was responsible for checking and collecting the materials on Fan Ming's novel and other related documents such as his diary, and his working notes and letters. They collected all these materials and spent months organizing them. However, the "character's list" had been burned so was not available to them. . . . Consequently, when they interviewed the other three members of the "four gentlemen" (Wu Jianli, Huang Lin, and Li Zongqing) they made those three each write a reconstruction of the character list from memory. Then they also asked Fan Ming to do the same and then compared the four versions. . . .[76]

The outline of *New Journey to the West,* which Fan Ming had written for the creation of the novel, mentioned a series of policy measures enacted in Tibet after it had been liberated, and what opinions the Working Committee (TWC) had, and what opinions he had. He actually used this book to advertise his own political standpoint or view. The whole manuscript was more than 40,000 characters, and it was edited a lot. There were three kinds of edits: the first one used red or blue ink to alter things; the second used both red and blue ink to alter things; the third used ink to cover [blot out] the original sentences. After the first two ways of altering things, we could still read the original content, but after the third way of alteration, we often couldn't read it at all. Nevertheless, Fan Ming's ideology, which was against the Central Committee, against the TWC, and against the Tibetan work policy, could be fully exposed.

At the beginning of the outline, Fan Ming used a book reference to express his reasons. He said that during the West Han Dynasty, Yang Xiong wrote a book called *Tai Xuan Fa Yan [The Law of Metaphysics].* Yang Xiong was a high-level official in the West Han Dynasty who was unsatisfied with the imperial court, so he wrote the book *Tai Xuan Fa Yan,* which included everything he opposed. However, once he turned in the book, the book was banned. The book didn't come out until after he died. Fan Ming's outline of the *New Journey to the West* mentioned this reference at the very beginning, and this showed pretty clearly what he meant: . . . that because his book was against the Central Committee and the TWC, it couldn't come out for sure.

The 40,000-character outline of the novel actually described the discrepancies between his policy opinions and those of the TWC in the 1950s. Fan Ming at that time realized that the result of the political battle between himself and Zhang Guohua was also the contest regarding whether to support the Dalai or Panchen, and that he had lost. The Central Committee was very clear about its Tibetan policy, which held that winning over the Dalai's group was the priority. So the measures that Zhang Guohua implemented were the Central Committee's basic policy. Fan Ming's opinions were against those of the Central Committee. He advocated winning over the Panchen's group. The essence of his opinion was to use the Panchen's group to replace the Dalai's group. That was the core of his views.[77]

---

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid., 73–74.

In September 1958, seven months after the rectification campaign started and after one hundred days of Rectification Meetings at which Fan Ming was denounced and exhorted to confess, Fan was openly accused of being anti-revolution [Tib. sarje ngologpa] and the leader of an anti-party group [Tib. tang ngogö tshogpa'i tsowo] who supported the Panchen and opposed the Dalai Lama. And he was labeled as [Tibet's] "great rightist" [Tib. yechog chemo].[78] During this seven-month ordeal, Fan Ming said he never confessed to being wrong or that the novel was anti-party. Instead he said, "They didn't have anything concrete to back up this accusation of my major crime (Tib. nyechen), so they fabricated things.[79]

In the end, Fan Ming had his party membership and his military status rescinded, and he was sent to a reform-through-labor camp [Ch. lao gai] for seven years in September 1958. After that, he was imprisoned for thirteen more years (1965–78). His wife Liang Feng, Bai Yunfeng, and others were also sent away.

Fan Ming described his final expulsion from Lhasa in the back of a truck and how, until the very end, he was still trying to get the other cadres to accept that the Dalai Lama was the villain and was planning to revolt.

> On September 15th, when Guo Xilan passed on the notification sending me away, one platoon escorted me, and two other persons held me by my arms. In front of the vehicle, I saw Zhang Jingwu, Wang Qimei, and Guo Xilan waiting next to the vehicle. I remembered that the notebook with the information of the planned rebellion by the Dalai group was in my pocket. Before I got on the vehicle, I said to Jingwu and Qimei with sincerity, 'I still have one thing to tell you. My personal affairs are not a big deal, but the Party's affairs are important; don't act on emotion; please pay attention to the whole situation; that is, there is no doubt that the Dalai will commit treason. When saying these, I took out the notebook and kept telling them that in this notebook there is the whole plan of the political and military rebellion of the Dalai; please learn the lesson from the old saying that "brothers may quarrel inside the wall, but they should resist the outside intruders together" [Ch. xiongdi xiyuqiang, er waiyu qiwu]; you should always be careful about the treasonous activities of the Dalai group; and you should not be tricked by them. Wang Qimei grabbed my notebook and kicked me. He abused me, saying, 'you damn rightist; just get out and just take care of your own business. Who were your brothers, you rightist? We will unite with the Dalai Lama and resist you, the outsider, you, the counterrevolutionary.' I withheld my tears because my heart was breaking. Under the escort of the armed guards, I left Lhasa with deep sorrow.[80]

The internal split over policy and power within the CCP in Tibet was ended and, not surprisingly, Mao and Deng's policy prevailed, but not for long, as the revolt in Tibet was to occur only a few months later. Years later, in 1993, when the author interviewed Fan Ming, he believed that he had been correct all along, and if Beijing had listened to him, the history of Sino-Tibetan relations would have been very different. There would have been no uprising and the Dalai Lama would not be in exile with over 100,000 Tibetan followers trying to delegitimize Chinese claims to sovereignty over Tibet.[81]

---

[78] Fan Ming, interview, Beijing, 1993, H.0230.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Fan Ming 2009, 403.

Meanwhile, at the time that the TWC was "rectifying" Fan Ming, Chushigandru had moved to Lhoka and fighting had started, so the TWC was exerting increasing pressure on the Dalai Lama and the Kashag to take action to control the Khambas before things got completely out of control. This will be examined in chapter 8.

---

[81] Fan Ming, interview, Beijing, 1993, H.0230.

8

The Kashag Responds

Starting in mid 1956, more and more armed and angry Khambas fleeing from the forced land reforms and bloody revolt in Sichuan began to arrive in Lhasa. Their growing presence was understood by both sides to be a potentially destabilizing factor in the already strained matrix of Sino-Tibetan relations. The Kashag and the TWC discussed how to deal with them, but no agreement was reached. The Kashag argued that this was a Chinese problem, since the cause of their coming was the imposition of forced reforms in Sichuan. The solution, therefore, was for the Chinese to (1) stop all new reforms there, (2) reverse the reforms already completed, and (3) offer full amnesty to the Khambas who had fled to Tibet. The Chinese rejected this and countered that this was a Tibetan not a Chinese problem. They insisted that since the Tibetan government wanted internal autonomy over Tibetans in Tibet, this was granted in the Seventeen-Point Agreement, so now it was to be the Tibetan government's responsibility to deal with these Khambas. Despite this impasse, as long as the Khambas were just "hanging around" Lhasa causing no trouble, how to deal with them was not a front-burner issue. However, once Chushigandru set up its military headquarters in Lhoka in June 1958 and then started fighting with the Chinese, dealing with this nascent rebellion became a priority for the Chinese and therefore for the Kashag, which responded initially by sending a high-level delegation to the Khamba's headquarters in Lhoka to persuade them to stop.

This official delegation was headed by a senior lay official (Mingyiling) and a Drepung abbot (Ngagpa Khembo) and arrived in Lhoka in August 1958, just after Gombo Tashi had left to secure the weapons stored in Shang Ganden Chöngor. They delivered an edict from the Kashag that told the Khambas: "It is not okay to set up a regiment there. Tibet has been liberated peacefully. You Khambas and Amdowas should go to your own homeland. It is not okay to spoil our land." It also said that they should refrain from attacking the Chinese in Tibet and should disband.[1] The important point was that the Khambas were told that if they agreed to desist and returned to their homes in Sichuan, the Chinese had guaranteed that they would not be punished regardless of what they had done during the revolt, and they would be helped economically. This was basically what Zhou Enlai had told the Dalai Lama in India.

This message was received very poorly by the Khambas. On the one hand, they were excited and optimistic about their new military headquarters and by the prospect of soon receiving military support from the Americans, and on the other hand, they were completely opposed to returning to live under the socialist reform system that the Chinese had implemented in Kham. In addition, they were furious with the message itself, because they felt that the Lhasa delegation was representing the interests of the Chinese, rather than the Dalai Lama. Radru Ngawang explained, "At that time, the people from Kham and Amdo were saying that the Tibetan government has sent us such a bad edict. All the people who didn't know that there were [secret] internal relations [between Phala and Chushigandru] were very disappointed by this."[2] From the Khambas' perspective, they wanted the Tibetan government to support their insurrection and provide them weapons and supplies, not tell them to go back to Sichuan. Consequently, the delegation's reception was hostile, and it quickly returned empty-handed to Lhasa. The Kashag, of course, was not surprised by this failure, but was satisfied in one sense, since it enabled them to tell the TWC that they were taking concrete action to stop Chushigandru.

However, the Khambas were a real problem. The danger they represented for the Tibetan government started escalating in late August to September 1958, when the fighting between Gombo Tashi's forces and the PLA took place in Nyemo. The news of these first battles, moreover, reached the Dalai Lama quickly, because Gombo Tashi sent a messenger to Ganden Monastery, where the Dalai Lama was taking a part of his monastic (geshe) exams (figure 5).

The response to this news by the entourage of the Dalai Lama was shock and uncertainty. Shock at the size, intensity, and close proximity of these battles, and apprehension because the fighting had already reached that level just a few months after the Khambas had left Lhasa. And there was real fear about whether this meant that the fighting would soon spread to Lhasa and threaten the Dalai Lama and his government. Nyemo was only about ninety miles southwest of Lhasa. A Tibetan who was there serving the Dalai Lama recalled his reaction to this news:

---

[1] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.02. A copy of the edict was not available for this book.

[2] Ibid.

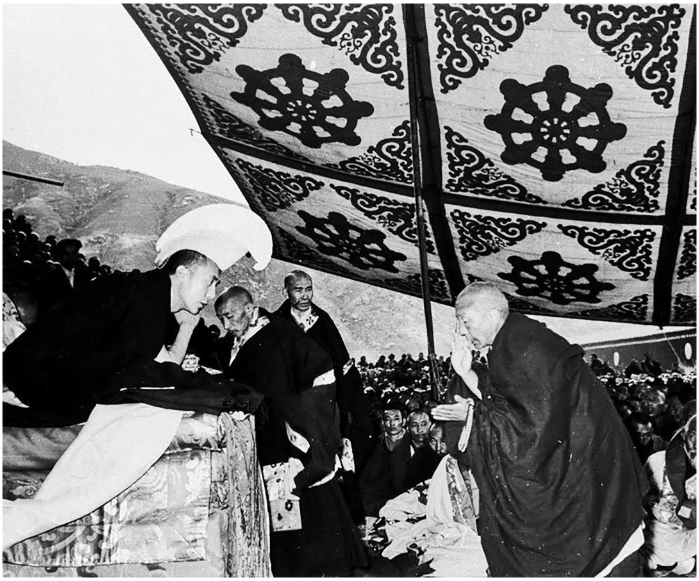


FIGURE 5. Dalai Lama taking his Geshe exam at Drepung Monastery, 29 August 1958. Courtesy of Chen Zonglie.

> While we were in the Ganden, we heard that a battle had been waged in the Nyemo area and that the Nyemo River had changed color because of the blood that was shed by so many people who were killed there. . . . There was lots of talk like this. . . . It was a very frightening time. . . . People felt they were sitting on a pile of thorn bushes.[3]

Not long after that, the Kashag took another step meant to show the Chinese that they were trying to defuse the Khamba issue when it sent teams of officials to deliver an edict instructing the district heads (dzongpön) not to provide any assistance to Chushigandru. There is no copy of this edict, but Gyentsen Tempel, one of the officials who was sent to take this edict to Tsang [the province encompassing southwest Tibet], recalled his mission:

> The Kashag sent us to take an edict (Tib. gagya) about the Khambas to all the various districts. This order said [something like], "The Khambas have started a *singja* (disturbance/revolt) and the TWC is criticizing us a lot about this, so we have to end this Khamba disturbance. If the Khambas turn in their arms to us and disband, [they can return home and] their past deeds will not be investigated and they will not be punished." Drangtöba [another official] and I delivered this edict in 1958 . . .
>
> Q. What was your main responsibility?

---

3. Döndrup Norgye, interview, Lhasa, 2002, OR.0331.01.

> A. It was primarily to deliver the edict to all the districts [in Tsang], and secondarily, if we met up with any Khambas, to try to persuade them to stop their activities. . . . We met the two heads of Shigatse . . . and gave them the edict, which they sent to the other districts under their administrative control. We also told them that we have been instructed to discuss these issues with the Khambas, so if there are any Khambas, they should send them to Shigatse to meet with us. So we stayed in Shigatse for a while.[4]

The pressure on the Tibetan government to deal with Chushigandru was also mentioned by the Dalai Lama.

> The Kashag distributed a proclamation (Tib. tsa tshig) to the various districts saying the Khambas are rebels so you cannot make friendly relations with them. You must tell us where the rebels are and you are not allowed to support them. This proclamation was distributed to all districts. The Chinese said to me and the Kashag that you have to distribute this. So we had no choice but to distribute it.[5]

THE NEHRU VISIT

While the Khamba insurrection was starting in Central Tibet and Gyentsel Tempel was on his way to Tsang with the proclamation, in India it became time for Indian Prime Minister Nehru's proposed visit to Lhasa. He and President Radhakhrisnan had been invited to visit Lhasa by the Dalai Lama in 1957 when the Dalai Lama was in Gangtok on his way back to Tibet. Nehru at that time replied that he had a lot of work that summer, so could not come, but he thought that the following year (1958) would be good.[6] Nehru officially received the Dalai Lama's invitation from Beijing in January 1958,[7] but his visit fell through in the summer of 1958 because the Chinese government decided that it would be better not to have Nehru visit Lhasa in the midst of the growing insurgency and also because the Central Committee was unhappy with India's lack of action to stop the anti-Chinese activities of Tibetan émigrés in Darjeeling/Kalimpong.

---

4. Gyentsen Tempel, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0014.01.

5. Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.

6. Shakabpa diary, entry for 6 December 1957. This was mentioned in a letter sent by the Dalai Lama from Lhasa.

7. Note to Dutt, the Foreign Secretary on 27 January 1958, in a footnote to "Cable to R.K. Nehru," in Mukherjee and Mukherjee 2010, 671. "Nehru asked him to inform India's representatives at Gangtok and Lhasa that Chou En-lai had conveyed the Dalai Lama's invitation to Nehru through India's ambassador in Peking. Ch[ou] En-lai had said that he would be happy if Nehru could go there and that [he] intended joining Nehru there as he had never been to Tibet previously" (cited in Mukherjee and Mukherjee 2010, 672).

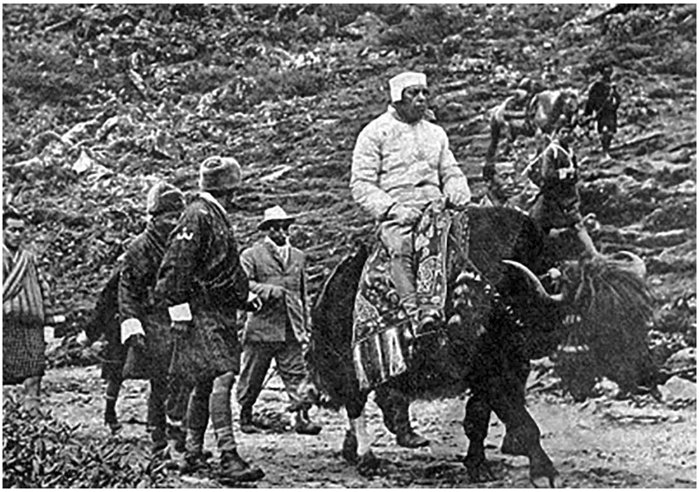


FIGURE 6. Prime Minister Nehru on yak, 1958. Courtesy of Photographic Archive, Demton khang Center.

Nevertheless, since Nehru had already made plans to visit Bhutan on his way back from Lhasa, he decided he would still visit Bhutan, and to get there in September 1958 he crossed from India via Yadong in Tibet (figure 6). This meant he would spend two nights in Tibet, one night in Yadong on his way to Bhutan and one night on his way back. Consequently, a top-level official welcoming delegation was sent from Lhasa that consisted of Kalön Surkhang, General Tan Guansan, Lhamön Yeshe Tsultrim (representing the Panchen Lama) and Yang Gongsu from the Chinese-run Lhasa Foreign Office.[8] This delegation met Prime Minister Nehru and his daughter Indira Gandhi in Yadong on 18 September 1958.[9]

In honor of the visit, the Chinese officials in Yadong hosted a dinner for Nehru at their headquarters. Nothing significant was discussed, but it is interesting to note that the Indians informally tried to impress the Tibetans with the superiority of their political system, commenting to Lhamön as an aside that "the example of India and Bhutan will give the Chinese something to think about with respect to Tibet."[10] What he meant by this was that Nehru was going to publicly reassure

---

[8] NCNA (New China News Agency], 19 September 1958 [from SCMP, no. 1860, 24 September 1958].

[9] Claude Arpi, "Nehru in Tibet: The Visit that Partially Materialized," http://claudearpi.blogspot.com/2012/10/nehru-in-tibet-visit-that-partially.html.

[10] Janglocen Wanam, interview, Lhasa, 1993. Wanamla said he heard this from Tsipön Tsögo.

Bhutan of India's acceptance of its sovereignty.[11] Nehru's subsequent speech in Paro, Bhutan, made that point clearly and obviously contrasted markedly with China's position toward Tibet. In it Nehru said,

> Some may think that since India is a great and powerful country and Bhutan a small one, the former might wish to exercise pressure on Bhutan. *It is, therefore, essential that I make clear to you that our only wish is that you should remain an independent country choosing your way of life and taking a path of progress according to your will.* At the same time, we should live with mutual goodwill. We as members of the same Himalayan family should live as friendly neighbours helping each other. Freedom of both Bhutan and India should be safeguarded so that none from outside can do harm to it.[12]

After dinner with Nehru, Surkhang and Tan Guansan drove to Shigatse to attend a major meeting on about 20 September. However, bad news was waiting for them as soon as they arrived, because they were informed about the 17 September Chushigandru ambush of the convoy at Wuyuk, in which everyone was killed. The Khamba problem had just escalated to a new level. Tan Guansan, who was well-known for his very bad temper, now showed it at that meeting, which was attended by all of the Tibetan and Chinese officials/cadres in Shigatse, including those from the Panchen Lama's administration. There were about one thousand people in attendance.[13]

Tan Guansan spoke first. In an agitated fashion, he openly attacked the leading officials of the Tibetan government, despite the fact that one of its most senior officials, Kalön Surkhang, was sitting beside him on the podium. In a manner similar to the 14 July cable of the Central Committee, but this time at a public venue, Tan accused the Tibetan elite of fostering and abetting the Khambas by allowing them, for example, to take the government's arms cache at Shang Ganden Chöngor without a fight. This speech is important, because it was the first time a senior Chinese leader had *publicly* attacked the Tibetan government's top officials. As such, the incident became famous both for Tan's angry accusatory and demeaning remarks, and because Surkhang made a strong response to this, in which he countered Tan's charges.[14] Several Tibetan officials who were present that day recalled this incident vividly. Gyentsen Tempel, for example, remembered that Tan said,

---

[11] Historically, on 8 August 1949, India agreed to Bhutanese sovereignty in a friendship treaty signed in Darjeeling between the Government of India and the Government of Bhutan. Article 2 of the treaty said, "The Government of India undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan. On its part the Government of Bhutan agrees to be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations." Nehru was reiterating this. On the UNHCR Refworld website, refworld.org/docid/3ae6b4d620.html, accessed 16 March 2015.

[12] Warikoo 2009, 141 (emphasis added).

[13] Gyentsen Tempel, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0014.02.

[14] Even the bitter arguments between the two Sitsab and the Chinese leaders in 1951–52 occurred in small, private meetings.

> The Tibetan government was not doing its work well. He criticized the Tibetan government, saying that all its work had been duplicitous—"respectful in front, but in opposition behind."[15] . . . Tan said, "There are a few people here who were sent by the Tibetan government to do a job [dealing with the Khambas], but they haven't done anything at all. If this were the CCP and if we had sent some people to do a job and they hadn't done it, they would be executed."

After Tan finished his angry harangue, Surkhang spoke and made a point-by-point refutation of Tan's assertions. Then he accused the Chinese of not doing anything about a mess—the Khambas—that was of their own making and which they, not the Kashag, were responsible for cleaning up. He said,

> From the beginning up to now, we, the Local Government, have never violated the Central Committee's orders. Until now, we have been doing our best. *As to the Khambas, we have reported many times to the (Tibet) Work Committee, saying that the Khambas are launching disturbances, so please eliminate them. However, since the Central Committee couldn't eliminate them, how can we eliminate them?*
>
> And actually, most of these Khambas do not belong to the Tibet Autonomous Region and the Tibetan Local Government. Most of them are Khambas from the four provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, and Qinghai, so if we try to give orders to them, how could it work out? So the Central Committee must take whatever action is needed. You are scolding us a lot saying that the Tibetan government is not doing well, but this is the [real] situation. . . . You should think about it carefully.[16]

Another lay official, Chape, was also in attendance and recalled the event similarly,

> A. At the meeting, Tan Guansan said that China has no plans other than to peacefully liberate Tibet, but the Tibetan government has been [duplicitous, being] respectful in front of us but secretly opposing us behind our backs. He criticized the government for its behavior and said some very pointed criticisms about Surkhang.[17] He said that the [Tibetan] government's main representatives act very clever when they come [in person], but after they return, they do bad things. There are people who are like that. If they continue to act this way, later it will not be good. If they do disgusting acts that draw blood from their brother nationality [the Han Chinese], that will be bad. The Central Government has been very tolerant until now, but there is a limit to its patience. If you continue to act like this, the consequences will not be good. So in this manner, he conveyed a powerful criticism of the Tibetan

---

[15] In Tibetan: ngöndzi goggey.

[16] Gyentsen Tempel, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0014.02.

[17] Tan did not specifically use Surkhang's name, but everyone knew he meant him since he was the only high Tibetan official there. Surkhang at this time was the senior Kalön (Tib. tripa).

government's high officials and a threat that China's patience with the Khambas is running out.

While Tan Guansan was standing and speaking forcefully in this very combative manner, Surkhang, the leading Kalön, was seated on the same platform. I was a [Tibetan] government official, so I was looking at Surkhang to see how he was reacting to this and I noticed that he was acting like he had dozed off. He was [insulting Tan by] acting like he wasn't paying any attention to what Tan Guansan was saying. However, after Tan Guansan finished speaking, Surkhang stood up and responded to his comments, saying "Regarding the issue of the Khambas, the Dalai Lama and the Kashag have done all kinds of things, such as giving them advice and sending people to tell them to stop.[18] But some people are stirring up trouble through lies. In the future, we will try to "alleviate the anger of China and quell the Khambas' disturbance/revolt" and we will see this [problem] through to the end.[19] Consequently, as to whether the [Tibetan] government is doing anything or not, in the future you should look carefully." He spoke calmly, without anger (Tib. ngarpo), and he didn't say insulting things about China. Surkhang spoke for a long time and gave a clever response to Tan Guansan's accusations, [openly] correcting his mistakes. He said that with regard to the Khambas, if we [the Tibetan government] were to send soldiers to fight them, we have only a small number of troops [so we can't handle that]. Moreover, when we sent a delegation to Drigutang to talk with them, they didn't listen. So we don't have the means to do anything about this. Nevertheless, we will [try to] "alleviate the anger of China and quell the Khamba's disturbance/revolt." He said this in a very clever way.

Q. What did people think about this?

A. There were various opinions. Some thought Tan was right, and some thought Surkhang was correct.

Q. Were people astonished by Tan's overt criticism?

A. Yes. This was the first time that Tan had openly criticized them [the Tibetan government] in this really forceful way, so people were startled and frightened. Everyone thought that now things will not go well. It made a bad impression. In his speech, Tan said that if you continue to do as you are doing now, there will be blood spilled between the two brother nationalities.[20] Then he went on to say, "You have to pull your horse back from the edge of the abyss."[21] This made those of us who were listening afraid and gave us the bad impression that all will not go well.[22]

Another Tibetan aristocrat heard from relatives that the Chinese translator could barely [dare to] translate Surkhang's comments, because he was nervous about verbalizing such powerful retorts to what Tan had said. That official said that from this time on, the relations between the Kashag and the Chinese general got exponentially worse.[23]

---

[18] Surkhang was referring to the Mingyiling delegation that was discussed earlier in this chapter.

[19] In Tibetan: khambey singja jagthab dang zhongyang gomba dangthab.

[20] In Tibetan: spun zla mi rigs nang khul la khrag thon yas gi gnas tshul lhag gi red.

[21] In Tibetan: yangsane ta kha gagore.

[22] Chape, interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0009.03.

The Dalai Lama himself recalled hearing about the incident and commented on it,

> I sent Surkhang Shape to receive Nehru, and there Surkhang really made an effective speech in front of the Chinese officers. . . . Many Tibetans expressed that he did marvelous. Usually people considered him as not very strong, so people were a little surprised that he really performed very strongly. He didn't directly criticize the Chinese, but most probably, I think, he [showed] the spirit of the Tibetan people [and showed] that he [had not] come as the representative of the Chinese government.[24]

Another incident that illustrates the extent of Tan Guansan's frustration and anger at the Tibetan government, as well as the tense relationship between that government and the TWC at this time, involved the two Tibetan government officials who had been sent by the Kashag to deliver the proclamation in Tsang. As soon as they reached Shigatse, the capital of Tsang, they reported to Surkhang, who told them to go at once to meet Tan Guansan and tell him about their mission. Surkhang must have thought that this would give Tan firsthand evidence that the Kashag was taking at least this concrete step to deal with the Khambas. Tan, however, was not impressed, as Gyentsen Tempel recalled,

> We went right to see Tan and told him about leaving Lhasa and coming to Tsang . . . et cetera. However, after he heard all this, he started pounding the table with his fist while saying, "Whether it is in the past, present, or future, you people from the Tibetan government are all the same. You do one thing in front of someone and something else behind their back." Then he said, "You people talk about China, but I want you to tell me about the connection between the [Tibetan] government and the Khambas. . . . The Khambas have taken all those guns; how could such a situation have come to pass?" [He was implying there must have been collusion between the Khambas and the government.] I said, "I don't know anything about that. In fact, when we came here, we ourselves were afraid of the Khambas." Tan was very angry that day. He would get up and sit down, and then get up and bang the table. I was [also] an official [working in an office] in the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region (PCTAR), so I knew Tan's translator [Baba Lobsang Tsültrim] who after some time secretly gave me a sign to leave. However, when we started to go, Tan came after us, yelling at us. We left quickly while he was yelling, without even looking back.[25]
>
> Q. Were you afraid when Tan scolded you?
>
> A. No. Because the Tibetan government was still intact, I wasn't frightened [because authoritatively we were under the Tibetan government]. . . . That evening

---

[23] Canglojen, Wanam, interview, Lhasa, 1992.

[24] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.

[25] Gyentsen Tempel, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0014.02.

Lobsang Tsültrim, Tan's translator, came by car and told us that Tan Guansan wanted to see us, so we went. Tan had [calmed himself] and asked us to tell him everything again that we had said at noon. This time he responded a little better and said, "What do you two plan to do now?" We said that our mission from the Kashag was to distribute the edict and discuss the situation with the Khambas, but since there are no Khambas in Shigatse, we planned to go to Gyantse, because we had heard that there were Khambas in Nangkartse and it is likely they would go to Gyantse. I think Lobsang had told Tan that I was also a PCTAR official, so Tan acted a little nicer this time.[26] Tan then said, "Don't go to Gyantse. Tomorrow return to Lhasa with me." . . .

After that, when we immediately went to see Surkhang to tell him that Tan said we should return with him tomorrow, Surkhang said, "That is not permissible. You were sent by the Kashag to talk with the Khambas, so it is important that you should wait in Gyantse. If the two of you return saying that Tan Guansan told you to return, you will probably get scolded by the Kashag." The two of us, therefore, were in a dilemma regarding what to do, because Tan Guansan had told us to go back and Surkhang was saying that this is not permissible. So we two discussed the options and decided that since the Kashag had sent us here, we should follow its orders and go to Gyantse. So we stayed in Gyantse for nineteen days, although no Khambas arrived. . . .

However, there was a branch office of the TWC in Gyantse that didn't have many soldiers or officials in it, so it asked us to stay [and help them]. Those officials thought we could be of help if the Khambas arrived, although we really wouldn't have been any help. But we agreed [and worked in that office] for nineteen days. Then one day we received a telegram from the Kashag [through Shigatse], telling us to return to Lhasa. [When we told] the Chinese (TWC) branch office in Gyantse this, they told us to stay. Because there were two governments [to deal with], our work was very difficult.

Q. When was this?

A. In fall (1958). The harvest had just been completed, so it was about the eighth or ninth Tibetan month (September-October-November).[27]

The Chinese officials in the branch office were furious when the two Tibetan government officials refused to continue to help them, but they weren't allowed to force them to stay. The most they could do was to show their anger by refusing to let the two use one of their office's cars to drive to Lhasa or Shigatse. The Tibetan officials, therefore, had to travel to Shigatse by horse, using the Kashag's traditional corvée transportation passes (Tib. lamyig) which authorized them to requisition corvée horses and transport animals at each transportation station (Tib. satsig) along the way.[28] Then, from Shigatse, they got a car and returned to Lhasa.[29]

---

[26] He means he was a Tibetan government official who had been sent by the Kashag to work in one of the offices of the PCTAR.

[27] Gyentsen Tempel, interview, India, 1993, H.0014.02.

[28] This traditional network of transport stations operated throughout most of Tibet. They were located about a half day's walk from each other, so the corvèe people and animals could transport the goods and still return to their homes that same night. The peasants living in each catchment area were required to provide whatever the travelers' transport pass specified on demand.

[29] Gyentsen Tempel, interview, India, 1993, H.0014.02.

This incident illustrates clearly how the Tibetan government, despite being a subordinate part of China and despite the Chinese having offices and troops in Tibet, retained a high degree of internal autonomy over its own officials and offices, even late in 1958. However, after almost eight years of both sides trying to maintain a public persona of cooperation and cordiality, conditions had now started to deteriorate to the point where anger and frustration on the Chinese and Tibetan sides was breaking through the thin veneer of public civility and cooperation. The recent Khamba battles and ambushes, and the way that the Khambas were able to take Tibetan government weapons from Shang Ganden Chöngor, were pushing the TWC to escalate their pressure on the Kashag. The TWC insisted more and more forcefully that it was the Tibetan government's responsibility to stop the Khambas, warning them that if they did not, and the revolt increased, there would be serious consequences.

Liushar, one of the Kalöns at that time, recalled that when he and his colleagues visited the TWC for the 1 October celebration of Chinese National Day [in 1958 in Lhasa], one of the Chinese military commanders, Ting Fuwu . . . rose and told them that they were making a mistake by placing their trust in the Khambas. "Communist China" he said, "will pay no heed to the Khambas, whose total number can be only a few thousand, at most ten thousand to twenty thousand. Earlier, we easily defeated eight million GMD soldiers. That's why you are making a mistake in trusting the Khambas." Liushar also said that after the Americans made the first weapons drop to Chushigandru in October 1958, the Chinese officials told the Kalöns that when they fought the GMD, the GMD had American weapons, whereas we had only sticks and stones. However, later we defeated them and got all those guns. So we welcome the Americans parachuting arms to the Khambas, because we will get them all in the end.[30] Another Tibetan official recalled hearing that the Chinese were angrily saying things to the Kashag like, "It will be good if you sweep away all that garbage from here [meaning the Khambas from Sichuan]."[31]

Li Zuomin, a senior Chinese cadre, also recalled this period,

> At that time there were Tibetan soldiers. They were the local soldiers and the local government was responsible for the local security [in Tibet]. So the Tibetan soldiers had to do that [quell the Khambas]. This policy was mentioned clearly and this was told to the PCTAR. I was the interpreter.
>
> At that time, in accordance with the Central Committee's policy, the [Chinese] Military Area Headquarters and the TWC held several meetings with the Kashag and told them that the PLA is the defense force [of the nation and the border] and the present situation is about local security, so the so-called Local Government must take the responsibility for local affairs. You have four or five Tibetan army regiments

---

[30] Liushar, ms. Tibetan transcript of 1983 interview, Information Office, Dharamsala, India.

[31] Gyegyeba, interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0011.02. He was a *kadrung*, or Kashag secretary.

> for doing this. If there are border issues, we will send the PLA, but since this is a local security matter, the Local Government must take the responsibility. The Central Committee said this many times very clearly.[32]

A Tibetan monk official, Drakten, also recalled hearing that the main Chinese message to the Kashag at this time was that they should go and talk with the Khambas. If the Khambas listen, that would be good. However, if they would not listen, then the (Tibetan) government should send troops and get rid of them. And if the (Tibetan) government was unable to defeat them [by themselves], the Central Committee would send reinforcements. The Central Committee would not hesitate to do this.[33] On the other hand, if the Tibetans did not handle the Khamba threat and the revolt became widespread, the PLA would suppress the revolt themselves and then implement reforms. In other words, Tibet would suffer the fate of Sichuan. The Dalai Lama also said that Tan Guansan "demanded that I mobilize the Tibetan army against the 'rebels.' It was my duty to do so, he said."[34] This situation placed the Kashag in an extremely difficult position, because Tibet would lose everything if things got worse, which was likely to happen unless the Kashag/Dalai Lama did something to persuade or force Chushigandru to desist.

At stake was the continuation of a relatively comfortable day-to-day situation in Lhasa and the countryside—with the exception, of course, of the Chushigandru problem. As mentioned previously, the Dalai Lama and his government were administering internal Tibetan affairs and still had their own army regiments. The Chinese imposed no taxes on Tibet or Tibetans and played no role in the appointment of rural and urban officials. Nor were they interfering significantly in the countryside, for example by trying to foment class warfare. They also were not arresting Khambas and other pro-separatist Tibetans, nor were they trying to force the Kashag/Dalai Lama to dismiss all Tibetan government officials who were well known to be anti-Chinese. Similarly, the Chinese played no role in apprehending or prosecuting people accused of crimes. The Kashag was also still able to make new laws regarding taxes, loans, estates, and so forth unilaterally. And while the Chinese had established a new banking system, the Tibetan government not only continued to utilize its own currency, but was still refusing to accept the standard Chinese (paper) currency used throughout the rest of China. The Chinese, therefore, had to use silver dollar coins (dayan) exclusively in Tibet.

Similarly, while most Lhasans opposed China's physical occupation of Lhasa/Tibet and the fact that Tibet had been compelled to accept being a part of China, in reality, life in Tibet had changed remarkably little since 1951. The huge monastic segment was still completely intact, and the great monastic seats such as Drepung,

---

32. Li Zuomin, interview, Beijing, 2011, H.0053.06.
33. Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.08.
34. Dalai Lama 1990, 127.

Sera, and Ganden were operating just as they had been in 1940 or 1920. The atheistic CCP had not tried to interfere, let alone constrain or diminish, monastic recruitment or income, nor did they interfere with how monasteries administrated themselves. Tibet's remarkable religious civilization, therefore, was still flourishing.

Similarly, the aristocratic and religious manorial estate holders continued to operate their estates using hereditarily bound peasants to farm their land with no pay. The traditional Tibetan government (Tib. ganden phodrang) had become downgraded to merely "the local Tibetan government" (Tib. sane sishung) within the PRC, but Tibetan society and civilization were continuing. And due to Mao's "Great Contraction," there was no talk of having to implement land and social reforms soon. This was, to be sure, not the de facto independence Tibet enjoyed in 1950, or even the high-level autonomy Tibet experienced during the Qing Dynasty, but it was unique in the PRC.

Governor General of Northern Tibet Thonsur's description of his relations with the Chinese and Chushigandru in late 1958 illustrates the autonomy of the Tibet government regarding governing its people. He said that since he had received no specific instructions from the Kashag about Chushigandru in 1958, he was operating on his own as to how to deal with them and the Chinese stationed there.

> Q. At that time, how many Chinese soldiers were there in Nagchuka?
>
> A. There were cadres and soldiers living permanently in Nagchuka Prefecture, but I didn't know clearly the number of soldiers. At that time, soldiers were also coming from China, because the road from Xining passed through Nagchuka. . . . But there weren't a large number of soldiers there, because if there had been a large number, we would have seen them. But it was also not [small] like five, six, ten soldiers. As you said, probably, there were several hundred. I can't tell you for sure.
>
> When the Chinese were attacked by the "Defend Buddhism Volunteer Army" (Tib. Tensung Tanglang Magar) [Chushigandru], they were suspicious that the Governor General and Chushigandru were linked together, and the Chinese bothered us all the time about this. It was very annoying. However, we really did not have any links with them and we weren't involved in their attacks on the Chinese. On the other hand, it was also not necessary for us to handle Chushigandru [as they had no order to do that], so we didn't do that. We just let them attack [the Chinese]. We let them do whatever they wanted.
>
> Q. Did you normally have relations with the Chinese officials in Nagchuka?
>
> A. Yes. Sometimes when there were meetings, they would call us.
>
> Q. What kind of meetings were these? You were doing your regular [Tibetan government] work with your co-head, right? So did you also do work collaboratively with the Chinese?
>
> A. No. There wasn't anything that we had to do collaboratively and regularly with the Chinese. The Chinese were doing their work and we, the Tibetan government, were doing our own work. Whenever there were some special events, like Chushigandru attacking the Chinese, they would call us to a meeting and would say, "The

> Khambas are attacking us. Are you going to let them do this? Aren't you the local officials who are working here? You have to teach them a lesson."
>
> Q. Did you have Tibetan soldiers under your command? . . .
>
> A. Yes. We had one platoon (Tib. dingkha) (of about twenty-five troops) from the Khadang Trapchi Regiment as our bodyguards. We also had an armory in Nagchuka that had been left from early times. It had Bren guns and machine guns and probably there were cannons. There were also a lot of bullets and many English carbines. . . .
>
> Q. What were the Chinese doing at that time? . . .
>
> A. The Chinese were staying there doing things for Chinese who were traveling up and going down through that place [back and forth to inland China on the main Qinghai-Tibet motor highway]. I didn't know what they were doing internally. At that time, Chushigandru was opposing the Chinese everywhere, so the Chinese sometimes called meetings and publicized that Chushigandru was not behaving well and they were robbing things.
>
> Q. Did you receive any orders from the Kashag telling you to hand over the weapons to Chushigandru or telling you not to hand over the weapons stored in the armory in Nagchuka?
>
> A. We didn't receive any special orders regarding this. Chushigandru also didn't come to get the weapons.
>
> Q. Did the government tell you that if Chushigandru came, do not hand over the weapons or did they say that you should hand over the weapons to them?
>
> A. There wasn't any special order. I'm not sure whether Chushigandru even knew about the weapons that were being kept in Nagchuka.[35]

So despite having lost the war and its main army in Chamdo in 1950, almost eight years later the Dalai Lama/Kashag clearly had something of enormous value to preserve and inversely had everything to lose if the Khamba issue was not dealt with effectively. The specter of what had happened in Sichuan cast a long shadow over Tibet, and the conundrum the Kashag and Dalai Lama faced was how the good aspects of the current situation could be sustained in the face of Chushigandru's new insurgency in Central Tibet. The Kashag, however, could not reach a consensus about whether they should agree to do what the Chinese were suggesting; namely, to employ the Tibetan army against the Khambas. A part of this was because relations within the Kashag were not good. For example, Kalön Ngabö was strongly in favor of using the Tibetan army, but the other kalöns were either against it or unsure, so in the end, the Kashag decided to convene the Tibetan National Assembly to discuss the Khamba issue. This was a traditional mechanism the Kashag used when difficult or unpopular decisions had to be made, since it shifted responsibility about what should be done from the four or five Kashag ministers to the assembly. If the assembly decided not to use the army, the kalöns could tell the Chinese that this decision was the will of the whole Tibetan government, not that of the Kashag.

---

[35] Thonsur, interview, India, 1995, H.0035.01.

THE TIBETAN ASSEMBLY MEETING

On the recommendation of the Kashag, the Dalai Lama sent an order instructing the Kashag to convene a National Assembly meeting. The assembly was convened in the Tsuglagang Temple in the heart of Lhasa.[36] Normally, when an assembly meeting was to be held, the Kashag sent a note to the eight Trungtsi (or Trungtsigye in Tibetan) stating the subject for discussion, and then the Trungtsi announced this and jointly chaired the subsequent National Assembly meeting.[37] This time, however, the Kashag wanted to make sure the assembly understood their charge precisely, so Kalön Surkhang came in person and headed the meeting, while the eight Trungtsi administered the meeting under him.[38]

About seventy delegates attended the assembly meeting, including two representatives from each rank of the monk and lay officials' hierarchy, plus representatives from the monasteries, army, and society. However, as Drakten, a monk official who participated in it, recalled, the meeting broke new ground in how it selected the delegates from the different government ranks.

> The order [for monk officials to attend the National Assembly meeting] came from the Dalai Lama's Secretariat (Tib. tse ga or tsegaa) and was announced at the monk officials' daily Trungja Morning Tea Ceremony. After this, while everyone was leaving the Trungja meeting, people were talking about the [upcoming assembly] meeting, saying that we should not continue to do as we have in the past [where the higher offices selected which officials should attend]. . . . [Consequently], the various ranks . . . met informally on their own to choose who would represent them. This was probably the first time in Tibet that "voting" was ever used.[39]

---

[36] A part of the Tsuglagang Temple housed Tibetan government offices, and this meeting was held in one of these, the Tibetan government's Reform office (Tib. legjö legung). Chinese records talk about a Tibetan government meeting that was held in Norbulinga in November, but this one was held in the Tsuglagang Temple probably in mid October. In this instance, the type of assembly was the Large Abbreviated Assembly (Tib. tsondu hragdu gyepa).

[37] "Trungtsi" is an abbreviation incorporating the first syllables of tru-nyichemmo (the four heads of the Yigtsang Office) and tsi-pön (the four heads of the Tsigang Office). The trunyichemmo at this time were Ta lama Rongnamse Thubden Norsang, Bumtang Chömpel Thubden, Lhautara Thubden Tenthar, and Gyamtso Tashi. The tsipön were Namseling Panjor Jigme, Kheme Tsewang Thöndrub, Shukhupa Jamyang Khedrup, and Tsögosey Thöndrub Tsering.

[38] Drakten, interview, India, 1993, H.0001.11.

[39] Actual paper or hand votes were not used, and "voting" here refers to decisions made by consensus (Drakten, interview, India, 1993, H.0001.11). Kalön Surkhang said in an interview that this method had also been used in 1933 at the National Assembly meeting that was convened after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama (Surkhang, interview, USA, 1967, H.0235.01).

Drakten also explained the logic behind this,

> At that time there were some [officials] who acted as if they were possessed by the Chinese, and there were many who clearly and completely had the Chinese outlook. So it was said that if the government appointed representatives [the way it usually did], then people like that would be there [at the meeting], so no proper discussions would be able to take place [because representatives would not speak frankly in front of them]. Consequently, votes were taken so that no one who was working in a Chinese office [was selected], or if someone like that was selected, it was an official who had no belief in the Chinese. . . .[40] At the meeting, the eight Trungtsi were there [as usual], but all the rest had been selected by their sections.[41] When the lay officials heard about this, they followed suit and also selected their own representatives.[42]

The actual meeting began when Kalön Surkhang presented the topic to be discussed. Drakten recalled that Surkhang said for the first time that the "people" (Tib. mimang) should have a voice in the decision how to proceed.

> [Surkhang said], "Ever since the Khambas' organization started, the Central Committee has built fortifications and made many preparations [in Lhasa], and however one looks at this, the [Tibetan] government is powerless [regarding this]. Since we have come to such a situation where our power is inadequate, the time has now come for all the people [Tib. mimang] to think together [about what to do]. Just one or two of us thinking alone [as traditionally was the case] will not be able to manage this situation. . . .[43]
>
> "As His Holiness has ordered, there is a need to 'quell the Khambas' revolt and to alleviate the anger of China,' so this is the main agenda, and a lot of deviations [from this agenda] will not be allowed.[44] Therefore, please state your opinions about this topic. . . . At today's meeting, there are representatives from the army and the government's *trungtok* (clerks) so now it is no longer a situation where the higher ranking officials meet [to decide things] without the others participating. Consequently, no matter what, this is an issue in which everyone has to be involved. In particular, this is now a situation for the people to show their strength, because we in the Kashag do not have the means for doing anything."
>
> So in Surkhang's speech, there were elements that inspired the people. His talk was very effective. The people already had a feeling that they should do something, but it was what Surkhang said, even though it was a just few words, that really gave them a push. And as I think about it [in retrospect], with regard to the actions that were to follow later [the uprising in Lhasa a few months later], it was Surkhang's talk

---

[40] Many Tibetan officials had been seconded by the Kashag to work with Chinese, Tashilhunpo, and Chamdo officials in the offices of the PCTAR, so simply working there did not mean an official was sympathetic toward the Chinese.

[41] Drakten, interview, India, 1993, H.0001.11.

[42] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.01.

[43] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.08.

[44] This quoted phrase became widely used as a name for the meeting. See note 19 for the Tibetan.

> that provided the push for [those] events. It was like a seed that was sown in the people's minds that later grew to fruition when the people rose up at Norbulinga [in March 1959]. . . .[45]
>
> When the meeting began, it would have taken too long to listen to everyone's opinions, so it was decided to divide the meeting up into smaller breakout groups (Tib. tsogchung) which would meet to discuss the topic among themselves. . . . [Four] separate small groups were created [each headed by two of the Trungtsi]. . . . I was in the fourth breakout group. . . .[46]
>
> As soon as my subgroup meeting started, Tsendrön Barshi, a young monk official, spoke and took a hard line. His main point was that the problem is not the Khambas but the Chinese, because it was their decision to force democratic reforms in Sichuan that caused it [the revolt in Sichuan]. Consequently, the answer is for China to reverse the reforms and return to the traditional situation. If China does this, he said, all the Khambas for sure would gladly leave and go home and there will be no need for China to be agitated and the revolt could be quelled right away. So he said we should request that the Kashag talk with the Chinese according to this.[47]

As seen earlier, blaming the Chinese for the influx of Khambas was not a new idea, and the Chinese had rejected it earlier. And after the ambush of the Chinese convoy in Wuyuk, that kind of rhetoric would certainly not mollify the Chinese side's anger. They wanted to know what the Tibetan government was going to do to deal with the rebels who were now attacking and killing Chinese in the TAR, and presumably would continue to do so in the future.

Tsögo, a fourth-rank tsipön who was one of Kalön Ngabö's closest supporters, felt that this was just empty rhetoric, so he disagreed with Barshi and emphasized the need for realistic recommendations. "The problem right now is not the Chinese [and what they did in Sichuan] but rather the actions of the Khambas in Tibet. It is their attacks that are threatening the stability of the government and the safety of the Dalai Lama."[48] Drakten added that Tsögo also said,

> "It has been ordered to discuss how to quell [the Khambas], and that is also what the Chinese are saying. In addition, we have been receiving numerous petitions from the miser [peasants] in Lhoka saying that they are experiencing great hardship [because of the Khambas' excesses], so even if they [the Khambas] don't listen to us, we must

---

45. Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.08.

46. Drakten recalled that some of the higher rank officials in his subgroup were Ramba Theji, Trunyichemmo Gyamtso Tashi, Tsipön Tsögo, Khenjung Changkyim, and Shölpa Tsültrim Nyimala. The others were Sarchung Sey, the Ganden representative named Lhogum Sheysung, the abbot of Sera Je, Kungö Gyeda, Bashi Jedrungla, and a monk official named Chömphela, who was a clerk (Tib. chagdrung) in the Tseja office. Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.8.

47. Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.8; see also Bar zhi (Barshi) 2004, 162–65.

48. Despite being close with Ngabö and the Chinese, Tsögo could not be prevented from attending the assembly meeting since he was part of the Trungtsi and thus was automatically one of the chairmen of the meeting.

> consider their needs [the needs of the miser]." [This was implying that for the sake of the miser, force should be used against the Khambas if they do not listen to the Kashag/Dalai Lama]. So there was even such talk.[49] Then, I think it was Trunyichemmo Gyamtso Tashi who said, "Oh, I don't think we should do that. It's not quite okay to do that. Sending them [the army] against Tibetans who are the "Volunteer Army to Defend Religion" just doesn't seem to be right." Then Shöpa Tsültrim Nyima and others [in our subgroup agreed] and said that it was better to have discussions about this issue with the Khambas, and that we cannot send the army against them.[50]

A well-known Trapchi Regiment captain, Kedram (Kelsang Dramdrü), who was part of the third subgroup under Dzasa Mingyiling, recalled that his group had a similar disagreement over what to do:

> Mingyiling said that a lot of disturbances have been created because the Khambas have done unnecessary things, so everyone has landed in an awkward situation. Since that is the case, now we must 'alleviate China's anger and quell the revolt' between *Tibetans and Khambas* (Tib. khambö). But to this, others said that what you are saying, sir (Tib. kungö), is not correct at all. This is not a disturbance between Tibetans and Khambas. The Khambas and the Tibetans are not engaged in fighting. The Khambas are opposing the Chinese, not fellow Tibetans, so what you are saying, sir, is not acceptable. Secondly, we don't see any reason to apologize to the Chinese. Because of what the Chinese have done all the way up from Dartsedo [in Sichuan], our people could not stand it and so now we have this situation. And even in a situation such as now, they still were unable to bear the situation and out of desperation they have risen up. And so when the situation is one like this where it is something that was created by the Chinese, there is no reason why we have to apologize to them. Since this is the case, we don't accept what you said at all.
>
> [In reply,] he [Mingyiling] said that if you don't want to call it a Khamba-Tibetan revolt that is all right, but we have to apologize to the Chinese. Then others said we will never apologize. So in our group we did not get along at all.
>
> Then we thought about it, and those of us from the various military regiments discussed this and said that it is alright if you say that you will not refer to it as a Khamba-Tibetan disturbance. If you have to subdue the Khambas, then we from the various regiments will go. But the arms must be supplied by China. If China gives us the weapons, then we will destroy the Khambas. Actually, what we were thinking was to use this ploy to get a good supply of arms and then join the Khambas. But others said, how could we possibly say that when they are more clever than us. So it was said that we can't say that. So in our group, we did not get along well. Anyway, the various groups discussed the issue back and forth. Ultimately, the majority pointed their finger at the Chinese.[51]

---

[49] Gyegyepa, the Kashag's secretary/aide, recalled, "At this time, the Kashag was getting a lot of petitions from the dzongs complaining that the people were reporting thefts by the Khambas, et cetera, so this bothered the Dalai Lama a lot" (Gyegyepa, interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0011.04).

[50] Drakten, interview, India, 1993, H.0001.11.

[51] Kedram, interview, India, 1995, H.0041.04.

The final stage of the assembly meeting involved taking the comments from the subgroups and merging them into a draft resolution. After this, the meeting was temporarily adjourned while the resolution was sent to the Kashag for review. The representatives were told that they would be notified regarding the time for the next meeting.[52] There is no available copy of that resolution, but the overwhelming consensus of the four breakout groups was not to send the Tibetan army. Instead, Tibetan and Chinese sources say the resolution called for the Kashag to tell the Chinese that since the Khambas came because of the forced reforms, the Chinese need to agree to make the Khambas an offer that will induce them to give up their insurgency and return home.

In addition, it was decided that a new delegation should be sent to Lhoka to persuade the Khambas to stop. Sexin (Seshing), an aristocratic official who was a colonel (Tib. rupön) in the Bodyguard Regiment and a delegate, explained the assembly's conclusions: "The meeting decided that Khenjung Thubden Samjog and Namseling should be sent to Drigutang. It also said that the Bodyguard Regiment needed to further improve the measures they were using to protect the Dalai Lama. To that end it should call back the regiment's troops that were based in Shigatse, and summon the soldiers on vacation/leave to return.[53]

Tan Guansan, one of the heads of the TWC, also commented about the contents of the resolution in a speech he made to his cadres in December 1958.

> The 'resolution document' (Ch. yijianshu) approved by the meeting of officials' representatives emphasized that the reason why the Kham and the Amdo people came to Tibet to join in the rebellion is that the reforms had taken place in their hometowns. Because the conditions for doing reforms were not yet ready, the rebellion happened, and therefore they could not lead stable lives there, and they had to escape to Tibet. In the resolution document, they also emphasized that the Kashag didn't invite the Kham and the Amdo people to come to Tibet to join in the rebellion. The Kashag had nothing to do with them. With regard to the issue of quelling the rebellion, the officials' representatives put forward to the TWC their opinion that the Kham people who have joined in the rebellion should be absolved [from guilt] and they should be given jobs. If this occurs, the rebels will give up and then the rebellion [in Lhoka] will end.[54]

The National Assembly's decision to send another delegation to talk with the Khambas was not going to resolve the problem, since the Tibetan government had nothing new to offer the Khambas to desist. On the other hand, as in the past, it allowed them to tell the Chinese they were trying to resolve the issue. However, it was obvious that as Chushigandru continued to roam the countryside ambushing

---

[52] Bar zhi (Barshi) 2004, 167.

[53] Sexin (Seshing) 2007, 81.

[54] DPRC. Tan Guansan's speech to cadres on 23 December 1958.

Chinese convoys and attacking other facilities, the TWC would keep exerting more and more pressure on the Kashag to deal with them and, like blowing more and more air into a balloon, the question was how long it would take before it burst and Mao would decide to use his "last-resort" measure—the PLA—with Tibet becoming the next Sichuan.

When I interviewed Ngabö in Beijing in 1995, he emphasized this. In response to my question about what was the biggest mistake that was made in the 1950s, he answered without hesitation,

> The Tibetan government's greatest mistake was that when Chushigandru came they didn't stop them. That was the greatest mistake. They had to stop them. The Central Committee was saying [this] clearly [to us], but we weren't taking ownership of the problem (Tib. dago gyagiyomare).[55]

Gyegyepa, the Kashag's secretary/aide, recalled that Ngabö had said more colorfully, "A lot of garbage has come from the east and we must clean them up."[56] And Chape, a lay aristocratic official, had similar thoughts,

> As for the Khambas coming to Tibet, the Tibetan government could have stopped them if they wanted to, [but] the government internally welcomed the arrival of the Khambas. The Tibetan government could have put them down if they wanted. At that time, it happened like the saying, "The enemy couldn't estimate their enemy."[57]

AN "UNOFFICIAL" ASSEMBLY

Barshi, the above-mentioned tsendrön who worked under Phala in the Dalai Lama's Secretariat, was dissatisfied with the National Assembly's resolution because, in his view, it was too weak concerning protecting the Dalai Lama. It would simply continue the status quo, not improve protection for the Dalai Lama. The real danger, he felt, was the intensive work the Chinese were doing fortifying their buildings, rooftops, and compounds. As mentioned previously, although the Chinese side saw this as a defensive move to enable them to withstand a Tibetan/ Khamba attack until reinforcements could arrive, most Tibetans, such as Barshi, saw this as evidence that the Chinese were making preparations to start an offensive war against them, and the assembly's resolution did not do anything to remedy or counter that. Barshi was especially worried because the Chinese were occupying and fortifying buildings overlooking the Tsuglagang Temple. This posed a special threat to the safety of the Dalai Lama, because he would be visiting the Tsuglagang to take his geshe degree exams during the upcoming New Year's festivities in February 1959. Drakten talked about how Tibetans perceived the Chinese fortifications in an interview.

---

[55] Ngabö, interview, Beijing, 1995, H.0040.04.

[56] Gyegyepa, interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0011.04.

[57] In Tibetan: dra tsö drey malönpa. In this context it means: "The Chinese did not know what their enemy, the Tibetan government, really wanted to do regarding the Khambas who had come."

> Everywhere the Chinese lived, they had put sand in bags and made them into walls on the rooftops. . . . They also had sandbags in the windows. . . . And they had holes from which to shoot out, but if you shot at them, they had sandbags [to stop the bullets]. Samdru phodrang's [Sambo's] house was exactly in front of the Sungjörawa [courtyard] where His Holiness gives his teachings [during the New Year's celebration]. . . . The Chinese were living in Samdru phodrang's house and they had sandbags lining the roof and windows. On the roof there were also two Chinese guards holding guns. Likewise, from the Kyitöpa house, His Holiness's throne at Sungjörawa was just like a target. And since His Holiness will come there, all the government officials were also going to be there. . . . So it was said that if they pulled the trigger, then it would be just too much. Anyway, it was a situation where all it needed was a match to set things aflame. It was just ready to catch fire and all it needed was a "spark."[58]

Barshi, therefore, thought something more had to be done to protect the Dalai Lama than what was included in the assembly's resolution, so he came to the conclusion that he should create an organization that would make a commitment to take action to defend the Dalai Lama and Lhasa. Consequently, after the official assembly meeting, Barshi invited lower officials (from the rank of tsendrön down) to an unsanctioned meeting of the "Assembly" to discuss the situation frankly and decide how to proceed. Barshi said he excluded the higher officials because he felt that they were responsible for communicating with the Chinese on behalf of all of Tibet and were too involved in trying to maintain good relations with the Chinese to agree to engage in something aggressive like what he had in mind. So he sent messages to all of the lower rank officials telling them to come to a meeting in the Reform Office in the Tsuglagang Temple. All but one of these "lower rank" representatives came. One of the attending officials, Sheshing (Sexin), recalled, "I received a notification to go to the meeting at the reform bureau office tomorrow. The next day, when I went to the meeting, I saw representatives from the three monasteries, the military regiments, monk and lay officials, and lower officials. Usually, before going inside the assembly meeting, we have to wait outside the room until the higher officials such as the trunyichemmo or tsipön arrived. However, this time someone ushered us in saying, 'It is so packed that it is not appropriate for all of us to wait here. It will be better to go inside.'"[59]

---

58. Drakten, interview, India, 1993, H.0001.11.
59. Sexin [Seshing] 2007, 81.

Barshi said he opened this unofficial meeting with the following statement,

> The reason for calling this meeting is because it is not certain whether or not the Chinese will accept the recommendations included in the resolution of the Assembly, so the situation will likely become more and more tense. Therefore, it is the time for all of us to think carefully, make preparations, and put our thoughts into action in order to protect: (1) the life [Tib. gucha] of the Dalai Lama, (2) the well-being of Buddhism, and (3) the well-being of our nationality and homeland [Tib. rangrig rangyü]. Regarding this, what are your opinions? . . .
>
> All of them said that they agree with this, so I said, "If that is the case, then we must sign an oath saying that we will never back away from exerting all of our strength to protect these three principles." All agreed and . . . I made a draft of the oath on a samdra writing board . . . and read it to them. They all unanimously agreed to it, and the Tsipa [an attendee who was the Tsikang's secretary], made a clean copy on paper. I read it again [to the attendees] and then, starting with me, all of us signed our names to the oath before a photo of the Dalai Lama.[60]

[However], while the oath signing was starting, Seshing said that he was uncomfortable with signing an oath to do this, so he spoke out.

> I felt something was wrong. Normally, Kalön Surkhang, the Trungtsi, the Theiji and the Dzasa officials [the higher officials] would attend such a meeting, but because they were all absent from this meeting, [I thought] something must be wrong.[61] So I said, "Since no high officials are attending this meeting, it is not right for us to sign an agreement by ourselves. We had better notify all these officials this afternoon and then ask them to give their opinions tomorrow morning. So we should have another meeting. A secret meeting like this is too much responsibility for any one of us to take. . . .
>
> Barshi replied to this, saying "[If] it is not a good time to sign the agreement today, we can postpone it until a later time. But we have to keep this a secret and never disclose it to others. So let us now take an oath of secrecy in front of the Dalai Lama's picture." . . . I felt I should follow the others [in doing this], so I did.[62]

After this, a notice was sent around to those [higher] officials inviting them to attend a meeting the next day. Barshi recalled what ensued,

> The next day, just after the monk officials' Trungja meeting was over, I rode my horse and went to the upstairs of the Jokhang. There, except for the Shapes and the eight Trungtsi, all the other representatives had gathered in the Reform Office and were sitting quietly. Usually the Trungtsi would introduce the discussion topic for the meeting, but on that day, because there were no Trungtsi present, and because the

---

[60] Bar zhi (Barshi) 2004, 167–68.

[61] Normally kalön do not attend assembly meetings, but since in this instance Surkhang had attended the official meeting, Barshi mentioned him here.

[62] Sexin (Seshing) 2007, 78–83.

higher ranking officials did not know the specific purpose of the meeting, Kündeling Dzasa . . . said, "Today, except for the Shape and the eight Trungtsi, all the other members have come. All of us have received the same notice to come, *but we don't know who sent the notice and what is the purpose of this meeting.*"

I [Barshi] was sitting in the middle row and from behind me the monk official Temajog, Lobsang Nyendra, told me to tell everyone the purpose of the meeting, so I said, "Yesterday, we, the representatives of the officials below the rank of tsendrön, held a meeting and discussed three principles and all of us agreed that we will put these into action as much as we can. Because you people are senior to us and have had rich work experiences and are also people who can think big, we unanimously agreed that it will be good to invite you people and have a thorough discussion, so we sent the notice. We thank you all for coming. Please think carefully about the three principles and give us your instructions about what would be good to do to accomplish them."

They [the higher officials] talked among themselves and finally Dzasa Mingyiling said, "Now, Barshi has told us what you people have been considering and it is quite good, but actually, if you don't think carefully, it is hard to know whether this might cause great harm rather than benefit. You have to be stable [Tib. denbo]" [do not do things that threaten stability].

I responded, "As you have said, it is really important to have stability, but even if we say that we are stable and don't think about this matter and don't do anything to accomplish it, and even if we just sit down keeping our body straight in front of us [doing nothing], they [the Chinese] have placed sand in bags and have built bunkers facing towards us on the roof of Kyitöpa House where the Chinese bank is located, and they are ready to shoot. There is nobody else here other than us Tibetans, so we are their only target. If we will be killed, it will be useless to be stable, as we would then suffer the loss. For example, if we had to go to India, because it is a long way away, before departing we would have to prepare sufficient food and horses, since we couldn't walk. And we would also have to prepare guns to protect ourselves from bandits, and prepare clothing and other things because on the way the weather will be extremely cold. And then we must be able to actually walk out from the threshold [take the first step]. So although our purpose is to go to India, if one always says that it is dangerous and we must be stable, then, in reality, leave alone being able to take the step out from the threshold, it would be really dangerous if one didn't make the preparations for the trip. And even if you don't prepare to go near the threshold and just sit in your room keeping your body straight, when we look at how our opponent is getting prepared, then we all know that we are really falling backwards [doing nothing is not maintaining stability]. Therefore, we must think in accordance with this situation. Now is the time when we must get prepared and take action and make a move in a firm and stable manner in order to accomplish our goal. So please discuss this matter."

Again they [the higher officials] held a private discussion, after which the Lord Chamberlain Phala said, "Thanks for your consideration and for calling this meeting. [However] today, because of the absence of the Shapes and the Trungtsi, it will not be good if all of us hold a discussion on this."

Phala obviously thought that this meeting to form an ad hoc secret organization to prepare to defend against the Chinese was too dangerous for the stability of Lhasa, and thus represented a threat to the safety of the Dalai Lama, so he spoke forcefully to end the discussion, and it worked. The lower officials like Barshi, who worked under him, did not dare to oppose him openly. So Barshi backed down, saying,

> I said, "Our purpose for not inviting the Shapes and Trungtsi is because this work must be done continuously and it must continue right through until the end. Therefore, it is possible that we might encounter severe hardships [from the Chinese], so we thought that if such a situation occurred, they could definitely stay in the middle [between us and the Chinese] and save us from the danger. We have not been disregarding and looking down on them at all. In any case, if we people want to have all of them gather with us for a meeting, we will definitely invite them." So then it was agreed to have all of them come for a meeting, and we adjourned.[63]

But there were to be no further meetings, as Barshi explained,

> The very next day, a notice was sent informing the monk official representatives . . . to come to the Yigtsang Office in Norbulinga.[64] When I arrived there, the four Trunyichemmo were present and they gave us the following instructions, "You people have called a meeting on the side [Tib. surtsog] [unofficially, by yourselves], but henceforth, you are not allowed to do that."[65]

Drakten added that the Yigtsang also said, "You have met once and now it is over. That was a very dangerous activity. However, since you have done this with great determination and with a good heart, this time there will be no punishment, but from now on you are not at all permitted to do this."[66]

This action by the higher authorities is not surprising, because Barshi's idea of an ad hoc organization actively starting to prepare to counter the Chinese in Lhasa would certainly have exacerbated the fears and anger of the Chinese at an extremely sensitive time. And since it was ad hoc, the Kashag would have no way to control what it did. Consequently, as soon as the Kashag and Trungtsi found out what was going on, they immediately intervened to stop what, to them, was a dangerous provocation that would produce no positive result and could easily make the situation much worse or lead to violence. And of course, what they were doing was completely illegal in the Tibetan government system, as they had no authority to convene an assembly meeting.

---

[63] Bar zhi (Barshi) 2004, 169–71.

[64] The Yigtsang Office was in charge of monk officials and monastic affairs. The Tsigang and Magjikhang did the same for the lay officials and military officers, respectively.

[65] Bar zhi (Barshi) 2004, 171.

[66] Drakten, interview, India, 1993. (H.0001.11).

As Barshi and the other monk officials were leaving the Yigtsang Office that day, they learned that the lay/militaryofficials and the monastic representatives had received the same order to desist, so Barshi's idea was now finished. Still, Barshi did not want to drop this, so he brought a few of the officials who had left the Yigtsang with him to the Jokhang to discuss what they should do now. At this gathering, Barshi has written that he told the others,

> This morning, we have received an order from our office saying that we must stop meeting. So unless something becomes necessary, for the time being we will stop meeting. However, we have voluntarily taken an oath and signed it, so should there be any danger to the three principles from inside or outside, *we will never ever change or stop our purpose and duty.* Therefore, it is like the proverb, "If the drum is not beaten" [tib. ngala yugü ma nünna].[67] So whenever there is a danger to the three principles, we will send a notice and you should be prepared to come whenever we need you. Not only you the representatives, but you must also make close connections with the *mimang*, the "people." Also, if any of us leaks the secrets of the meeting and withdraws, he will be executed immediately. So you must think according to this." All of them agreed to this.[68]

This group of lower rank officials will turn out to be important when it became time to send a message to the Lhasa residents to come to Norbulinga on 10 March 1959.

In the end, as we saw, the assembly recommended not to send Tibetan troops, ostensibly because they feared the soldiers might not obey orders and instead might take their weapons and join up with the Khambas rather than fight them. This had been the reason the Kashag and the Dalai Lama had given the Chinese previously when the Chinese pressed them to send their army to deal with the Khambas in Lhoka, so this was nothing new. Instead, the assembly recommended that a new delegation be sent to Lhoka to try to persuade the Khambas to halt their actions. The Kashag and Dalai Lama accepted this recommendation.

However, while that is what happened, historians must also consider what alternatives were possible. In this situation, was it really likely that Tibetan troops would refuse to obey their commander's orders when confronting the Khambas, let alone that they would defect and join the Khambas? Kalön Ngabö believed that this was just an excuse put forth because most Tibetan government officials really sympathized with the goals of the Chushigandru insurgency. Ngabö further believed that the Tibetan army could have handled the Khambas, and there is evidence that he may have been right.[69] Moreover the Dalai Lama, as will be seen in the next section, himself indicated that this was not the real reason for not wanting to use his army.

---

[67] There is a second clause to this saying that says: de srid gzhan dang khad ji ʻos. So together the saying means "If the drum is not beaten, there is no need to do anything else"—that is, if you are not called to fight the Chinese and protect the Dalai Lama, there is no need to do anything.

[68] Bar zhi (Barshi) 2004, 172 (emphasis added).

THE TIBETAN ARMY AND THE KHAMBAS

The first issue to examine with respect to the Tibetan army is whether a functional, trained army still actually existed in late 1958. Two points in the Seventeen-Point Agreement dealt with the military. Point 15 said, "In order to ensure the implementation of this Agreement, the Central People's Government shall set up . . . a military area headquarters in Tibet (Ch. xizang junqu)." And point 8 said, "Tibetan troops shall be reorganized by stages into the People's Liberation Army and become part of the national defense forces of the People's Republic of China." However, because the Tibetan representatives at the agreement negotiations objected strongly to this, a compromise was made wherein point 8 was included not in the public version but in a secret codicil in which both sides agreed to permit three thousand Tibetan army troops to remain after the rest were decommissioned. So although the official goal was for the Tibetan army to be incorporated into the PLA at some time, the Tibetan army would continue to exist under the command of the Kashag and its own Military Command Headquarters (Tib. magjikhang), not the Chinese Military Headquarters in Tibet. These Tibetan troops and their arsenals, therefore, remained completely under the Tibetan government's control right up to the uprising in 1959.[70]

Part of the confusion over the status of the Tibetan army derives from the Chinese wish to give the outward appearance that the Tibetan army was being incorporated into the PLA. To achieve that, they insisted that two kalöns be given the rank of PLA vice-commanders in the Tibet Area Military Headquarters. Consequently, the Kashag selected Ngabö and Ragashag for this, and they were given PLA uniforms and participated in the formal inauguration of the Tibet Area Military Headquarters on 10 February 1952 (and subsequent official PLA celebration events). However, this was solely a face-saving device. These two were PLA commanders in name only and played no role in PLA military affairs.[71] Conversely, from 1951 to 1959, the PLA had nothing to do with the operation of the Tibetan army or vice versa. The Tibetan government trained and paid its own troops, promoted and demoted its officers, and shifted its troops internally on its own.

---

[69] Ngabö, interview, Beijing, 1995, H.0040.04. He said, "After that it [the Khamba revolt] got more and more serious. And internally there was no one suppressing them, although it wasn't that it wasn't possible to suppress [Tib. lem] them."

[70] Goldstein 1989, 767.

[71] Phüntso Wangye, interview, Beijing (cited in Goldstein, Sherap, and Siebenschuh 2004, 174–76). See also Goldstein 2007, 301–5.

The Chinese side raised the issue of incorporating the Tibetan army into the PLA again during the Dalai Lama's visit to inland China in 1954–55, and during that visit, the Dalai Lama and the kalöns agreed to reduce the size of the Tibetan army by two-thirds (from three thousand to only one thousand troops). Five hundred of these would be the Dalai Lama's Bodyguard Regiment and the remaining five hundred would be a Lhasa police force. Thus, the famous Trapchi regiment would cease to exist.

However, when the Dalai Lama and his entourage returned to Lhasa in 1955, this plan engendered such strong opposition from the army and other nationalistic officials that the Dalai Lama/Kashag backed down and did not make the reductions. The Chinese reluctantly agreed to this, but to save face, the Kashag had to agree to another symbolic change regarding their army. The Chinese had been furious from the moment they arrived in Lhasa, because the troops and officers in the Dalai Lama's Bodyguard Regiment all wore British-style uniforms, as did the officers in all the other regiments. And despite frequent Chinese complaints about this, the Tibetan army refused to change, continuing to use these uniforms. The new compromise was that the officers and troops of the Bodyguard Regiment now would wear PLA-style uniforms, as would the officers of all the other regiments. The troops in the other regiments, however, would continue to wear Tibetan uniforms.[72] Sambo, one of the two Commanders of the Trapchi Regiment, recalled that an elaborate ceremony was held to "celebrate" this symbolic change,

> Tibetan soldiers [in my regiment] did not wear Chinese uniforms. It was only the officers who were made to wear Chinese uniforms. That occurred in 1956 . . . when the Chinese official named Chen Yi came to Tibet to inaugurate PCTAR. . . .
>
> That year, Marshal Peng Dehuai sent a telegram to the Dalai Lama . . . asking him to distribute the ranks on his behalf. The Dalai Lama accepted and we had the ceremony at the Bodyguard Regiment [Headquarters].
>
> The Dalai Lama was sitting on a chair and distributed the uniforms to the officers. Ngabö was the secretary at that function. Before the ceremony, we were wearing our British uniforms, but after that, the Chinese uniforms were distributed and we changed into them. . . .
>
> Q. When they held this ceremony, did all the soldiers attend?
>
> A. Probably not. Anyway, all the military officers were there. This was just before Chen Yi came, and we had to show this to him. That night, the Chinese gave a dinner party and we attended it.

Sambo, however, added emphatically that this was all just for show:

> From then onwards, whenever we went to any Chinese functions or meetings, we would wear their uniform. Otherwise, we didn't use them. And when the Chinese

---

[72] Goldstein 2007, 37–41.

> wanted to tell us [the Tibetan Army] something, they spoke to the Kashag, who in turn, would tell us and then we would follow it. *They would never transmit a direct order to us.* Also, after giving us the uniforms, the Chinese said that they would give us a salary, but we declined that, saying that we were already drawing our salary from the Tibetan government. The Chinese responded by saying that we should stop taking salary from the Tibetan government and should accept the Chinese salary. . . . None of us officers took it.[73]

Consequently, the Chinese army never had any operational control over the Tibetan army, which in 1958–59, consisted of 4 regiments in Lhasa totaling about 3,000 troops and officers: the Kusung (Bodyguard) Regiment located in the Potala and at Norbulinga (about 1,000 troops), the Trapchi Regiment located in Trapchi below Sera (about 1,000), the Chadang regiment located in the Tromsigang (about 500) and the Ngadang (Gyantse) regiment located at Lubu (about 500).[74] There was also a Gadang regiment in Shigatse. A Chinese publication reported that the number of troops in Lhasa at this time totaled 2,514 and there were another 570 in Shigatse.[75] Moreover, when the Kashag dissolved some regiments and reduced the size of others in 1952 (after the Seventeen-Point Agreement), these troops were decommissioned but they were not severed from the muster roll, so the Kashag could have recalled them to active duty and armed them from the various arsenals it had set up to hold the dissolved regiments' weapons, as Surkhang did at Shelkar dzong in 1958 (discussed below).

These troops, moreover, had modern weapons such as Bren guns, Sten guns, machine guns, grenades, mortars/light artillery, and plenty of ammunition. The above-mentioned Chinese publication, for example, said that the 4 Lhasa regiments had 266 Sten guns and 122 Bren guns.[76] In addition, some of the officers had gained battle experience in the Chamdo war of 1950. In other words, the remaining Tibetan army, though small, was intact and better armed than the Khambas with respect to automatic weapons and artillery. On the other hand, they were infamous for being undisciplined and poorly led.

But while the Kashag in fact had roughly three thousand trained infantry troops under its command, was this a reliable force? Would the Kashag have been able to command these troops to move on Chushigandru? And would these troops have obeyed an order from their officers to attack and fire on other Tibetans such as the Khamba fighters? There is no way to know this for certain, but there is historical evidence that suggests that they very well might have if the Kashag, with the Dalai Lama's approval, had ordered their commanders into action.

---

73. Sambo, interview, India, 1981, H.0205.25 (emphasis added).
74. Kedram, interview, India, 1995, H.0041.04.
75. Chen Bing 2007, 265.
76. Ibid.

One piece of suggestive evidence that supports this is an incident that occurred at the time of the large Chinese meeting in Shigatse in September 1958. As discussed earlier, at this time Tan Guansan gave an angry speech that accused the Tibetan government and Kashag of being complicit in the Khambas' getting the weapons from Shang Ganden Chöngor without having to fire a shot. This led Surkhang not only to publicly refute Tan Guansan's assertions at the meeting but also to do something behind the scenes to prevent the Khambas from seizing another government arms arsenal at Shelkar Dzong in southwestern Tibet, where there was a cache of weapons to arm a regiment of five hundred troops.[77] Although Surkhang was one of the senior government officials who was strongly anticommunist and had tried to convince the Dalai Lama to go into exile in both 1951 and 1956, in his position as kalön, he worried that if the Khambas were now able to take another government arsenal without a fight, it could push Tan Guansan and the Chinese to retaliate against the Tibetan government. So he decided to take steps to prevent that.

Lodrö Chöndzin, the Tibetan government's official in charge of Shelkar Dzong, recalled receiving—out of the blue—a letter sent by messenger from Surkhang in Shigatse about the arms cache and the Khambas. He explained,

> The Khambas had raided Ganden Chöngor, so I got an order from Surkhang that said, "I have sent two hundred Gadang [Shigatse regiment] soldiers to you from Shigatse. You two [he had a co-district head] should act as their commanders (Tib. depön). The Khambas have stolen guns from Shang Ganden Chöngor, so you should not let your guns fall into the Khambas' hands. [Also, you should] recall two hundred more troops from Dingri Dzong. You are not allowed to give anything to the Khambas."[78]
>
> I already had some concerns about this [Khamba danger] because at this time the two heads of Gamba dzong (a Tashilunpo official and an official from the Mingyiling aristocratic family) had both been killed by some traders [Khambas]. My co-dzong head had said [after that] that we must have some troops here to protect the armory and the district, so I had already summoned twenty-five soldiers. . . .
>
> Then Surkhang's order arrived, followed by the two hundred soldiers [from Shigatse]. In addition, we called up two hundred more soldiers from Dingri as ordered. Following this, we sent an order to the seven dzong that were under us, saying that each dzong should notify us at once if there are any Khamba problems or thefts, and we will send soldiers to expel them. . . .[79]

---

[77] They actually were stored in the Chödegön Monastery, which was adjacent to Shelkar Dzong.

[78] Actually, one of the Shelkar dzongpön had received a letter from Shakabpa in India that said, "We are many people and few weapons, so secretly give the weapons at Shelkar over to Khambas." That is why that dzongpön was later arrested. This letter had come before Lodrö Chönzin arrived. Surkhang, however, had not known of this (Lodrö Chönzin, interview, India, 1993, H.0032.01).

[79] Lodrö Chönzin, interview, India, 1993, H.0032.01.

> Q. Did any Khambas arrive in your dzong?
>
> A. After the troops [Surkhang sent] arrived, one night twenty-eight Khambas came. . . . [But they] left the next morning before sunrise. I didn't know about this until after they had left, when my colleague said to me the next morning, "Oh my. Last night we almost had trouble. Khambas came at night, but they left today." The soldiers didn't know the Khambas had arrived. . . . Later I checked into their [the Khambas'] activities and found that they had gone from our location to Tsögo's estate, where they took a good black horse. And then they stole things from here and there as they went on to Dingkyi Dzong. So we sent two lieutenants [*shengo*—heads of a platoon of twenty-five troops] with a letter to Dingkyi district about [the Khambas being on their way to his district]. We told the shengos to go day and night to deliver the message.
>
> Thubden Norbu [the head of Dingkyi dzong], sent us a reply through these two lieutenants saying that twenty-eight to twenty-nine armed Khamba horsemen had arrived and had stolen some things on the road, but they left Dingkyi immediately, so you don't need to be worried about them. I then sent another letter through two people to Dingkyi, telling them that "A group of Amdos of Yabshi have arrived in Shigatse and left, so let me know if they come to your area, as we heard they were headed for your district. . . . " We got a reply, saying "Five or six have arrived here, but they are engaged in decent trade. They aren't causing any disturbances." . . . .
>
> Q. If the [twenty-eight] Khambas had not left and if they had wanted grain and such things, what orders did you have from the government about them? Would you have had to attack them or what?
>
> A. We had no orders about that. But we wouldn't have given them the grain or bullets because these were in the [dzong's] storerooms which were locked with many seals, so we couldn't open them, and I didn't have any private grain to give them. So the only thing I could do would have been to say that I don't have anything to give you. If they had stayed, we would have told them not to steal from the people. That was our own plan. If they did steal things, the responsibility would be on our shoulders, so we would have warned them not to steal and engage in raiding.
>
> Q. If the Khambas told you to give them grain and you said no and the Khambas started fighting, would your Tibetan soldiers have fought with the Khambas?
>
> A. Yes, they would have. They would do whatever we ordered them. If we said fight, they would fight.
>
> Q. Wouldn't they have stood on the Khambas' side?
>
> A. They wouldn't have. They would have listened to our orders, because they were paid their salary and they were given the guns and bullets and they were obedient.[80]

This incident is a concrete instance where the two heads of a dzong in Tsang not only carried out Surkhang's orders without question, but were ready to deploy the Tibetan troops they commanded against the Khambas if needed—and they believed that the troops would obey them. And, of course, Kalön Surkhang had

---

80. Lodrö Chöndzin, interview, India, 1993, H.0032.02.

also fully expected the Tibetan soldiers would obey his orders [as a kalön] and stop the Khambas from taking the weapons at Shelkar Dzong. Nevertheless, after he returned from Shigatse to Lhasa, Surkhang did not want to try to push the Kashag to order the army to attack the Khambas in their main base in Lhoka unless there was broad consensus in the government, so he had argued that for an issue of such significance, the National Assembly should be convened.

There is also substantial historical evidence from recent times revealing that there was no deep-seated ethical principle that Tibetans should not make war and kill other Tibetans. Looking back at recent Tibetan history, the Tibetan army had at many different times shown no qualms about fighting and killing other Tibetans, including monks and Khambas. And conversely, Khambas had not only attacked Tibetan army units and killed their troops but had also actively assisted the PLA in 1950.

For example, in 1947, during the Sera Je College's monastic disturbance, the Tibetan army was used to put down the monk's revolt. Shatra, a Tibetan aristocratic official, recalled the incident,

> When the monks didn't listen to the orders of the government or to the mediation attempts of others, government officials led by Kalön Kapshöba and the Trungtsi went there . . . with troops from the Bodyguard Regiment, the Gyantse Regiment, and the Trapchi Regiment. They were given orders to surround Sera Monastery and arrest the monks [of Sera Je College]. The monks were opposing the government by firing [old] cannons, although these couldn't do much damage. The three Tibetan regiments were divided into a right, a left, and a middle unit, and some of the soldiers were also sent to climb up from the back side of the mountain [behind Sera] to seize the mountaintop. From the top, these troops saw some Sera monks situated lower on the mountain and opened fire on them. I heard that probably sixty to seventy monks were killed at that place. Then the remaining monks fled down [from the upper part of the mountain above Sera] into the monastery. After that, the Sera monks surrendered and the ringleaders were arrested and brought to the Shöl Leygung. . . . The two [ringleaders] were whipped and sentenced to life imprisonment in Shöl. The others were also sentenced according to their crimes.[81]

At the same time, two kalöns (Lhalu and Surkhang) were sent to Reting Monastery to bring Reting Rinpoche (the ex-Regent) back to Lhasa under arrest. To do that they had to pass right in front of Sera Monastery, so there was great concern that the Sera Je monks might try to rush down from their monastery and forcibly snatch Reting, who was Sera Je's main incarnate lama, and take him to the safety of their monastery. To prevent that, the Tibetan army's Trapchi Regiment had placed troops with Sten and Bren guns all around Reting Rinpoche, and they also had a soldier hold the reins of the mule Reting was riding. As it turned out, the Sera Je monks did not try to grab him, but no one had any doubts that had they tried to free him, the Trapchi troops would have opened fire and mowed down the charging monks.[82]

---

[81] Shatra, interview, India, 1981, H.0023.02.

Conversely, in 1950, when the PLA invaded Chamdo, the Khambas of Sichuan hired out thousands of their transport animals and handlers to carry provisions for the PLA forces who were invading Tibet and attacking the Tibetan army defending the border. In addition, some also helped to guide the PLA troops. So let alone supporting their fellow ethnic Tibetan soldiers against the Chinese, the Sichuan Khambas helped the Chinese to successfully invade Tibet.

These incidents reveal that there was no special ethical prohibition in Tibetan society about it being unacceptable for Tibetans to kill other Tibetans, or for the Tibetan army to be used against other Tibetans. Moreover, most Tibetan soldiers who had fought in Chamdo in 1950 held very negative views of Khambas, because not only did they provide that critical assistance to the PLA, but then some also attacked the Tibetan army troops while they were returning to Lhasa unarmed.[83] So had the Kashag ordered the Tibetan army to launch an offensive against the Khambas, it is not unlikely they would have been obeyed.

However, the Dalai Lama was opposed to using his army. Although the Dalai Lama traditionally was not consulted about executions, corporal punishments, and so forth, Tibet was in a new situation. If the Dalai Lama had felt it was necessary to use the army to preserve his government's autonomy, he could have ordered the Kashag to do so and they would have obeyed. So why didn't he?

In an interview with the author, the Dalai Lama said,

> So at this time, the Chinese said we should send Tibetan army troops and destroy the Khambas. This was clear. [However,] we said that if we send Tibetan troops to fight the Khambas, we do not know whether they will turn their guns on the Khambas or [against] this side, so we cannot take on that task. So this was made clear and rejected. . . . There were two reasons for this. One was that . . . this was very dangerous. And the other was that if we killed our own people it would be terrible. [But] the real inner reason is that it was unthinkable to send Tibetan troops and kill those who had said that they were loyal to Tibet and were fighting for the cause of religion. But to the Chinese we can't say that, right? What we told them was that this is very dangerous. Many soldiers have already gone [over] to the Khambas, so even though the Tibetan government could issue an edict, whether they would fire toward them or against us was not known. . . .[84]

---

[82] For a detailed discussion of Reting and the Sera revolt, see Goldstein 1989, 424–521.

[83] The Chinese disarmed the Tibetan soldiers who were captured, gave them some travel money, and told them to go home to Lhasa or Central Tibet.

[84] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.

The Dalai Lama went on to explain his thinking further,

> You felt one thing in your heart and you had to say something else with your mouth. So if the Khambas oppose the Chinese, we acted as if we didn't see it. The Tibetan government also didn't say to do it [revolt], but internally we thought it was good if they did it.[85]

Also relevant was that by this time many officials in the elite had heard that America (or an unnamed foreign country) was helping Chushigandru and this gave them hope—empty hope as it turned out—that now, unlike the fighting in Sichuan, the Khambas might be successful because of such outside aid. Such views seem naïve in retrospect, but at the time they helped many to reach the conclusion that it was best to give the Khambas a chance to see what they could do.

It is, of course, impossible to know if the Tibetan army could actually have handled the Khambas who, as the PLA found out in Nyemo, were tough fighters. However, Chushigandru at this time was weak internally and fragmented. Gombo Tashi and a large part of the better fighters were stranded far away in Shotalhosum and, as will be seen in a coming chapter, not only did the remaining fighters in Lhoka probably number no more than 1,500–2,000, but one of the largest regiments, under the command of Derge's Jagö Namgyal Dorje, was feuding with the Chushigandru main base. He and his regiment had moved from Lhoka to Dagpo-Kongbo in the east, and they were refusing to return or even cooperate with the main base.

Consequently, while the Tibetan army would not likely have been able to defeat Chushigandru, it is very possible that they could have forced them to move from their safe haven, which could have created a new set of conditions that might have weakened them further and possibly led to a negotiated settlement, especially since the PLA had said it would assist the Tibetan army if it ran into trouble.

The Dalai Lama/Kashag's unwillingness to employ the Tibetan army, therefore, was only partly a function of doubts about the discipline and obedience of the Tibetan troops, although that was certainly one important component. For the Dalai Lama and most of Tibet's elite, using the Tibetan army to attack Tibetan insurgents who were not rising up to fight against them but rather were fighting for a goal they all wanted—to end Chinese rule—was psychologically hard to do.

However, rulers often have to make difficult decisions that determine the course of history, and this was a time the Dalai Lama had just such a difficult decision to make. Should he strengthen his position and his autonomy in the PRC by doing whatever was possible to quell the nascent Khamba revolt, including using his army, or should he wait and see what happens? While the Dalai Lama was young, twenty-three years of age, he had had experience making difficult decisions. For example, he had decided not to remain in India after the Buddha Jayanti visit despite tremendous pressure on him to stay there. And he had agreed to a secret alliance between the resistance forces in Kalimpong and the Kashag. And after returning to Lhasa, he had decided not to meet the CIA's two Khamba representatives. And a few months later in March 1959, as will be seen, he refused to accept his advisors' advice to cancel his planned visit to Chinese Military Headquarters.

---

[85] Ibid.

The Dalai Lama, to be sure, wanted to maintain the status quo wherein the Tibetan way of life was continuing and he and his government were administering Tibet internally. But he also did not want to prevent Chushigandru, JKTS, and the Americans from together doing something to dislodge the Chinese. This was especially true since no one in Lhasa had any inkling that not taking military action to quell the Khambas at that time would, in just a matter of months, play a major role in pushing Tibet over the abyss that Tan Guansan warned Surkhang about. So in the fall of 1958, instead of taking steps to send the army to Lhoka, the Dalai Lama and the Kashag told the Chinese that in accordance with the wishes of the assembly, they were sending another high-level delegation to meet the Khambas. This mission and its dealings with Chushigandru will be discussed in chapter 9.

9

The Namseling Delegation and Chushigandru

Chinese pressure on the Tibetan government to deal with the Khambas, coupled with its unwillingness to use the Tibetan army against them, led the Dalai Lama/Kashag to authorize a second delegation to visit Chushigandru headquarters. The Dalai Lama explained,

> I asked the cabinet (Kashag) to send a message to the Khamba leaders that these were my wishes [not to fight the Chinese]. They [the Kashag] appointed a mission . . . to find the guerrilla leaders and tell them that. The same mission took a promise from the Chinese that if the guerrillas laid down their arms, no action would be taken against them. That promise carried the implication that if they refused, action would be severe. The Chinese had wanted to demand, in return for their promise, that the Khambas should actually surrender their arms, but the Cabinet (Kashag) persuaded them not to make that demand, because they knew that no Khamba would ever accept that.[1]
>
> Finally it was Namseling who went to Drigu to tell Chushigandru in Lhoka to disband their organization. We sent him to do this and to carry out the orders of the Kashag and *investigate the situation among the people there.*[2]

This delegation actually included five representatives. It was headed by Tsipön Namseling, Penjor Jigme from the lay official side and Khenjung Thubden Samjog (from the Tregang family) from the monk official side, and included three monk representatives, one from each of the monastic seats.[3] The choice of Namseling, however, was strange. Although he had excellent relations with Gombo Tashi, politically, it was well known that Namseling was not someone who wanted the Khambas to stop their revolt. Just the opposite!

---

[1] Ta la'i bla ma (Dalai Lama) 1963, 160–61.

[2] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07. The italicized sentence will be significant later.

[3] The three monk representatives were Drepung's Gyalrong Khembo, Sera's Töpa Jamyang Trinley, and a senior monk from Ganden.

Namseling, like many government officials, was angry about Tibet accepting Chinese sovereignty and about the Chinese occupation of Tibet, and he was deeply worried about Tibet's long-term future under communist China. However, unlike most government officials, he had chosen to take an active role to oppose the Chinese presence whenever possible, and had become one of the most active anti-Chinese Tibetan officials. He not only was a member of Phala's resistance clique, but he had also covertly advised the anti-Chinese "People's Association" and is widely believed to have helped them write their famous 1952 "petition" that asked the Chinese to withdraw all their troops.[4] Even more significant was his involvement with Chushigandru and its leader Gombo Tashi. Namseling's wife recalled that he used to go regularly on picnics with Gombo Tashi to Sangyib.[5] Namseling himself wrote, "From the time when Gombo Tashi assembled the Volunteer Khamba force and held discussions with them [about creating Chushigandru], until the time when they left Lhasa, I also was a part of that organization."[6]

Namseling's absorption with political affairs was so unusual that it affected his family life, frustrating his wife, as she explained,

> He took a keen interest in it [in the political situation]. . . . All he ever thought about was the government. He never thought about family matters. When I used to talk to him about certain difficulties regarding family expenses, he used to get very angry and say, "What are you talking about? The government is in a precarious situation. It is like the proverb, "Goat's excrement (pellets) on a doorstep/threshold,"[7] so what are we compared to that. If the government survives, then we do, if not, then we don't." So he never took any interest in private matters.[8]

Namseling's relationship with Gombo Tashi was more than just friendship; it was political. Phala was covertly supporting and assisting Chushigandru, but was unwilling to risk having direct contact with Gombo Tashi because of his positon as the Dalai Lama's Lord Chamberlain. Consequently, Phala used Namseling to convey messages to and from Gombo Tashi.[9] Namseling's wife knew about this and commented on it in an interview, “Probably, he [Gombo Tashi] couldn’t go to see Chemmo [Phala] himself, so Kungö [Namseling] went to see Chemmo.[10] Namseling’s Khamba bodyguard Dündrül added, “Our late Kungö [Namseling], was the main person with whom they [Khambas] made relations [with Phala]. Our Kungö was very close to Phala and when he [Phala] came for a visit to meet him, I couldn’t listen to what they were talking about and had to close the door and go out.[11] The Dalai Lama himself understood this, commenting, “Phala’s most trusted, most close, and most reliable person on this [the Khamba issue] was Namseling.[12]

---

[4] Even before the communist Chinese arrived, he had been in charge of identifying the Guomindang Chinese in Lhasa who were to be expelled by the Tibetan government in 1949 (Goldstein 1989, 613–14).

[5] Mrs. Namseling, interview, India, 1994, H.0064.01. Picnics were a standard device Tibetans who wanted to talk about sensitive topics used to not draw attention to their having a meeting together.

[6] Rnam gling (Namseling) 1988, 95.

[7] In Tibetan: them pa'i sgang gi ril ma. This saying conveys uncertainty as dung pellets can easily be knocked off or blown away.

[8] Mrs. Namseling, interview, India, 1994, H.0064.01.

[9] Namseling and Phala were first cousins, His mother was Phala's father's full sister.

Because of his anti-Chinese views and association with Gombo Tashi, Namseling feared the Chinese might suddenly arrest him or worse, send some Tibetans/Khambas working for them to attack or even assassinate him.[13] He said that he had been informed that some Tibetan CCP members who were meeting late at night in Yuthok House (Chinese headquarters) had been discussing assassinating nineteen anti-Chinese Tibetan officials, one of which was him.[14] His wife was so afraid that this might come to pass that she mentioned her concerns to Gombo Tashi, who told her not to worry about her husband because he will take care of him.[15] And he did. He sent one of his Litang young sidekicks (Tib. aptru) named Dündrül to serve as Namseling’s full-time personal bodyguard.[16] Dündrül, that young Litangpa, explained how this initially unwanted responsibility came about,

> One day Gyadotsang Thöndrub [a senior member of an important Litang family] came to see me and said that Andru Jinda [Gombo Tashi] wanted to see me. When I went there, Jinda said, “The two of us have something to tell you, and you should do what we say.” I said, “OK. What do you have to tell me?” He said, “We want you to go to Namseling.” I said, “I swear by the Three Jewels that I don’t know Namseling and I can’t do anything like that [protect him], because I am just one person.” Then he [Gombo Tashi] said, “Namseling is a very important person. He is the main advisor for our organization and he is a person to emulate [Tib. migbe dasa], and you are our best, most trustworthy person, so you have to go.” So . . . [in the end] I had to go to Namseling.[17]

---

[10] Mrs. Namseling, interview, India, 1994, H.0064.01.

[11] Dündrül, interview, India, 1994, H.0058.01.

[12] Dalai Lama, interview, 1995, H.0019.07.

[13] A number of Khambas from Batang were with the PLA in Tibet. For a biography of Batang’s most famous CCP cadre, Phüntso Wangye, see Goldstein, Sherap, and Siebenschuh 2004.

[14] Drakten, interview India, 1992, H.0001.06.

[15] Mrs. Namseling, interview, India, 1995, H.0064.01.

[16] Aptru were a category of young tough guys that Khamba traders and rich households maintained for protection, especially when going on trading trips. However, they actually did whatever the “boss” needed done. They lived and ate with the family and were very close, often almost like relatives.

[17] Dündrül, interview, India, 1994, H.0058.01.

Namseling also was not afraid to express his anti-Chinese views openly. For example, once at a meeting at the office that Namseling co-headed (the Chöjin legung), he and a group of government and monastic officials from Sera were sitting around talking. Drakten, a monk official who was Namseling's aide in that office, recalled being amazed at his frank comments to them about Chushigandru,

> Until everyone was present, they were just sitting around and talking about various things. At that time, Chushigandru had gone to Shang Ganden Chöngor and grabbed its weapons, so there was a lot of talk about this and how the fighting had taken place at Nyemo. . . . Then Namseling said, "Yes, this has happened. That was good. The government cannot give them arms, right? The Chinese wouldn't allow that, right? So one day the Chinese are going to take it all, right? They are not going to let things be [as they are now]. So what they did was okay." [And then he also said] . . . So just like the Khambas at Shang Ganden Chöngor, the three monastic seats could also go and take them out [the weapons stored in the government's armory in the Potala]." So he openly said this in front of all these monastic representatives. They were not going to reply to his statement, but in their brain, he put it in their minds. He sowed the seed. I thought, how bold it was of him to say that, since it was very risky and the Chinese would hear about it.[18]

Consequently, when the Kashag chose Namseling, they were selecting someone who had a very close relationship with Gombo Tashi and Chushigandru, as well as someone who was in agreement with Chushigandru's goal of revolting against the Chinese. Namseling was clearly not committed to the government's official policy of maintaining cordial relations with the Chinese in order to continue the status quo, so he could hardly be expected to make a persuasive case to induce the Khambas to stop their nascent revolt and return to Sichuan. And since all the top Tibetan officials including the Dalai Lama knew this, the Kashag's decision to send him is strange. One explanation is that the Kashag cared only about being seen by the TWC to have done something concrete. And since Namseling was friendly with the Khambas, they could tell the TWC that they were sending him because he might be better able to persuade them than the previous delegation, due to his friendship with Gombo Tashi and other Khambas in Chushigandru.

Another explanation, professed by Namseling in his autobiography, asserts that it was the Chinese who insisted he be sent.

> Weirdly, the Chinese leaders in Lhasa made a forceful request to the Dalai Lama via the Kashag saying that it was necessary that negotiations be carried out to get the Khambas to make an agreement to cease their guerrilla attacks, and that he [the Dalai Lama] had to mention my name [to the Kashag] for this [mission].[19]

---

[18] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.07.

[19] Rnam gling (Namseling) 1988, 95.

Dündrül, Namseling's Litangpa bodyguard, heard the same explanation from Namseling,

> I heard that the (PLA's) Tibet Area Military Headquarters called our Kungö to a meeting at which they talked about Chushigandru. Kungö Depön, the Commander of the Dalai Lama's Bodyguard Regiment, was also said to have been there.[20] They were astonished because the Chinese at that meeting told our Kungö, "You are someone who has done all kinds of reckless things." And they banged their fists on the table and said to Kungö, "You are the person who started Chushigandru, and Chushigandru has made relations with you." Now you have two paths in front of you. You must go to talk with the Khambas and bring them back and calm the situation. If you can do this, it will be okay and we won't have anything to say to you. Otherwise, you will have to bear all the responsibility for this." Then the meeting was over. . . . Consequently, at that time we were very worried that our Kungö might be arrested. . . .[21]

No mention of this was found in the available Chinese documents, and it is extremely unlikely that the Chinese would have pressured the Kashag to send someone like him specifically. Most likely, that is what Namseling told people as a cover story to mask the real situation, which was that he and Phala had worked out a plan for him to go *and stay with the Khambas* in order to advise Chushigandru and use his status as a senior Tibetan government official to help them deal with the local Tibetans. He actually had no intention of ever returning to Lhasa.

The covert role of Phala in Namseling's mission was clearly mentioned in an interview that included Namseling's partner Samjog,

> When they [Namseling and Samjog] consulted with the Kashag, they did it diplomatically. However, internally they consulted with Kungö Chemmo [Phala] about everything, and whatever Chemmo advised them, the two of them implemented. So the two of them just risked everything and joined with Chushigandru and did not pay heed to the order of the Kashag. This was discussed when the Information Department [of the exile government] invited all the [older] officials and interviewed them in 1983. At that time Samjog was present, and he said that this was what had happened.[22]

Because Namseling and Phala had worked out a covert mission for him to undertake with the Khambas in Lhoka, Namseling was extremely pleased when he was named to co-head the official mission.[23] His wife noticed that immediately,

---

[20] Namseling, however, made no mention of this meeting in his autobiography.

[21] Dündrül, interview, India, 1994, H.0058.01.

[22] Drakten, interview, India, 1993, H.0001.11. Drakten was organizing the interview session.

[23] Namseling could simply have gone on his own ("run away") to Lhoka, but since he was a government official, if he did that he would have risked losing his estates and his family's status as an aristocratic government official, so being posted to co-head the Kashag's delegation gave him perfect cover.

> When Kungö Samjog and Kungö came home after they were [first] instructed to go, they were not their normal selves. Usually they had a frown on their faces, but on that day they were so happy. They were very happy and said that the government had said that we have to go to India [she meant Lhoka]. I said if you are going to Lhoka, I also want to go. Later he told me that this will not do. Think carefully (he said). We are supposed to go and hold discussions, so if a wife and children are taken with us, then the Chinese will be suspicious, so that is not a good idea. [However] Just before the uprising [in 1959], he sent [a messenger] to Lhasa who told me that Kungö wants me to come to Lhoka. Unfortunately, I could not go then because it was the month in which my baby was due to be born.[24]

Dündrül, Namseling's Khamba bodyguard, similarly spoke about Namseling's positive feelings about going,

> Q. When he was told to go to talk to Chushigandru, was he very glad?
>
> A. Yes. He said to me, "It has worked out so well that I can go there. Now everything is okay." He told his wife to go and exchange money and then go to India as soon as possible. He told her that she shouldn't stay there (in Lhasa). Then we left Lhasa for Lhoka.[25]
>
> Q. So from the beginning, is it correct that your Kungö didn't have any plan to come back?
>
> A. Yes. He was saying, "Now, this worked out so well and I can really do something." At that time, he was thinking it would be good to go outside [of Lhasa] rather than stay in the chaotic situation [in Lhasa].[26]

In his biography, Namseling said that when he left Lhasa he was unable to tell his wife that he had no thoughts of returning. And even after he arrived in Lhoka, he did not tell her he wasn't coming back. He recalled, "although I often received letters from my wife [asking me] to return to Lhasa, I had no choice but to let go of (give up) my wife and children."[27]

The Dalai Lama knew about Namseling's pro-Chushigandru views, so when he met Namseling at his ceremonial "leave-taking" audience just before he left for Lhoka, the Dalai Lama recalled, "Regarding the specific instructions, I sort of recall saying that outwardly the edicts have been given saying that they [the Khambas] are reactionaries and rebels. However there is no need for disappointment [about our saying this]. So don't be disappointed, since you all know the situation. We are under the Chinese here and have no choice but to write that. In my heart, I appreciate the sacrifice of your lives and what you are doing for the whole of

---

24. Mrs. Namseling, interview, India, 1994, H.0064.01.
25. Dündül, interview, India, 1994, H.0058.01.
26. Ibid.
27. Rnam gling (Namseling) 1988, 96.

Tibet. Such things I have said."[28] And while the Dalai Lama was careful to explain that he did not tell the Khambas to launch attacks against the Chinese, he explicitly said that he sympathized with what they were doing—revolting against the Chinese.

> I never said fight the Chinese, and do so by going to this place and that place. Never did I say that, nor would I ever be able to say that. What was happening was a people's movement, so there was sympathy on our part which was expressed secretly if we had the opportunity. They were so dedicated and had really sacrificed (risked) their lives, so in that regard we appreciated what they did, and said it was good.[29]

The Dalai Lama also said he knew Namseling was going to stay and work with the Khambas,

> At this time, I think I was at Ganden Monastery. Namseling came to me for the official "leave-taking" ceremony. Namseling said [to me] I will work energetically. So what he was saying [was that] he was going to oppose the Chinese [energetically] and not that he was going to tell them [energetically] not to fight. He couldn't say clearly he was going to fight the Chinese and was to advise and help Chushigandru. So at that time, it was like that. One will understand the other as to what it meant [what was said]. He said it handsomely [elegantly] [Tib. dra chagbo]—'I will work energetically.' Poor fellow. [The real meaning that he was not returning] was indicated because he was crying when he said that now we are departing, [and] perhaps he will die. Otherwise, if he was really going to Lhoka [just] to tell the Khambas to not fight and then return, there would be no need to cry. So it was a very urgent, emergency situation.[30]

Namseling, therefore, was to remain in Lhoka to advise Chushigandru in order to make the insurgency more effective, and especially to remedy problems between the Khambas and the local people that could undermine the support of the local Tibetans for the insurgency going forward. Basically, he was to try to get the Khambas to curb the serious abuses that some Khambas were inflicting on the local Tibetans and help them to work more cohesively with the Tibetan villagers. Namseling was the perfect choice for this because, as Phala knew, he was personal friends with Gombo Tashi and other Khamba leaders, and he had been involved with Chushigandru from its start. At the same time, because he was a high-ranking government official, his stature as a Tsipön would enable him to become the "leader" of the Tibetan officials in the area and would also allow him to influence the peasants. Phala and Namseling thought that Namseling could improve relations between the Khambas and the populace. This is what the Dalai Lama was referring to in the first excerpt of this chapter, when he said that one of mission's tasks was to "investigate the situation among the people there."

---

[28] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1994, H.0019.03.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.

Of course, problems between the Khamba fighters and the local populace were not surprising, since the unplanned and unexpected arrival of several thousand Khamba fighters and many more thousands of horses and mules in Drigutang created the classic problem that armies face when moving into a new area: how to feed themselves and their animals. In this case the Khambas fighters were not from the locality, so they were complete outsiders with no families, relatives, or friends in the area.

Moreover, the food situation in Lhoka was complicated, since they were not simply passing through this area but had set up headquarters there and were planning to remain in the area for an extended period of time. And to make matters even worse, the Khambas had come to Lhoka with virtually no food and no trade goods or money to purchase food. Lhoka was a major agricultural zone in Tibet, but it was an area where the typical peasant families were heavily taxed and often in debt, so they would be hard-pressed to provide additional food and hay for the Khambas on an ongoing basis, on top of what they were already paying and consuming. In addition, the Tibetan government was not permitting its district heads to feed the Khambas with the grain the government stored in local granaries or the grain they were collecting annually as taxes.

Moreover, the Lhoka peasants at this time were not especially angry at the Chinese and had no immediate and compelling reason for joining an armed revolt against the Chinese. They were in favor of defending religion, and this is what Chushigandru was saying it was doing, but in their experience, traditional secular and religious life had gone on much as before 1951, and many villagers had probably never even seen a Chinese official or soldier and had never suffered any losses at the hands of the Chinese. Nor had any of the monasteries and nunneries in Lhoka. So there was no firsthand exposure to any Chinese abuses that would have motivated them to eagerly support Chushigandru. In fact, to the contrary, in a number of areas, the Chinese had helped local folks by providing low-interest or no-interest loans and offering new work opportunities for tasks such as construction and road building that paid wages in silver dayan coins. And whatever items the Chinese did need to get from the local peasants, they paid for generously with dayans. So in the summer and fall of 1958, the local Lhoka village population was clearly not angry and bitter at the Chinese due to mistreatment. This situation, therefore, was fundamentally different from what occurred in Sichuan, where the revolt started when the Chinese had begun to forcibly implement land and class reforms, and had imposed a ban on all personal weapons.[31]

---

[31] This is discussed in detail in Goldstein 2014.

The food issue had actually come up before Gombo Tashi left Lhasa, when a few of his close associates suggested that they should take a large quantity of trade items with them to Lhoka so they could give the peasants something of value in exchange for the grains and other foodstuffs they would need. Gombo Tashi, however, did not agree, as Radru Ngawang explained,

> As all of us were traders, so we told Andru Jinda that we are going to send several thousand loads of tea and cloth to Lhoka so that we won't need to ask the miser for food and fodder as soon as we arrive there. If we had something to pay to the miser, that would be good. We told Andru Jinda about that, but Jinda was probably thinking that [if this were done] the secret [of them leaving] might get revealed, so he said, "Don't worry about the food and the fodder, I have already made a plan for that. After we get to Lhoka, we won't need to worry about the food and the fodder." . . . We were all traders, so we could have sent tens of thousands of loads to Lhoka.
>
> Q. That was all your private wealth, right?
>
> A. Yes. If we had something to pay them, in the future, people wouldn't need to say that we took away this and that from the miser.[32]

But Gombo Tashi had actually not taken care of this. We do not know what he had in mind in Lhasa, but after arriving in Drigutang, he set out to obtain whatever he needed from the local area by securing voluntary donations from the local Tibetan government officials and the religious leaders in the region. He quickly took two steps. First, he established an administrative structure for Chushigandru that included a Supply/Salary Office (Tib. phokhang) and a category of nonmilitary, older officials called tsondzin, whose role was to deal with the nonmilitary issues, especially relations with the locals. Radru Ngawang said of this,

> After we established the camp, we appointed persons from among the more prominent people to look after the miser. They were called tsondzin. Their work was office work and to oversee the miser, and to see if the fighters were giving them difficulties or not.[33]

Second, shortly after arriving in Drigutang, Gombo Tashi summoned local Tibetan officials to a meeting and told them that Chushigandru was here to fight the Chinese and defend Buddhism, so he needed them to commit to providing supplies for his soldiers. These supplies would go to the new Salary/Supply Office, which would then distribute it to the fighters stationed in different locations. However, since the local Tibetan government officials could not turn over the taxes they collected, the overwhelming majority of the initial food and supplies came from the wealthier local families, since the bulk of the peasantry were already burdened with heavy taxes and debts. Radru Ngawang explained further,

---

[32] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2002, H.0012.05.

[33] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.01.

> Q. How was food for the people and fodder for the horses arranged?
>
> A. The heads of each dzong gave the order to the miser telling them the amount of grain they wanted. Then the miser delivered the grain to the dzong according to that order, and the heads of the dzong gave them a receipt [IOU] for the grain, tsamba, butter, and meat that they had collected. [In turn] Chushigangdru gave a receipt to the head of the dzong that said that they will pay the cost of the food later when we got independence.[34]

But while most of the grain was obtained from the richer families through their local officials, the reality on the ground was less orderly and disciplined, since units of Khamba fighters often took whatever they needed directly from the locals as they moved here and there to scout and carry out ambushes. In a number of instances, this went beyond just food and involved the theft of jewelry and other valuable possessions, as well as the raping of local women. So as summer turned to fall in Lhoka in 1958, relations between the Khambas and the local populace became strained, despite the locals' general support for the cause of "defending Buddhism." As a result, the locals in Lhoka generally feared the Khambas and resented their forced extractions. Those who had things taken from them without recompense were bitter and angry, and those who had just heard about this and other abuses felt afraid and helpless.

These Khamba abuses have been widely passed off in the West and among many Tibetans in exile as the actions of a few "fake" Khambas sent by the Chinese to smear the reputation of Chushigandru and this, to be sure, was one source of some of the abuses. However, there is no question that there had been widespread abuse and that "genuine" Chushigandru fighters were also mistreating the local peasants, as were other Khambas from Sichuan who were in Lhoka but not part of Chushigandru. Consequently, complaints from district officials started arriving at the Kashag with queries about how the Kashag could protect the local population, who were the "citizens" of the government. Moreover, it was obvious that this situation was only going to worsen the longer the Khambas stayed in Lhoka and the adjacent areas of Dakpo and Kongpo.[35] This problem was mentioned frequently in interviews with Tibetan government officials as well as discussions with Chushigandru leaders themselves. For example, Chimi Gombo, who was then one of the co-heads of Lhapsö Dzong in Dakpo, talked about his experience with Chushigandru,

> Chushigandru came to the south and began their military regiment, which was progressing well. However, they had a lot of people and we, the dzong heads in Lhoka and Dakpo, had to provide food for them and fodder for their horses. When they

---

[34] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2002, H.0012.05.

[35] Dakpo and Kongpo were under the Dagkong Jigyab (governor general), while Drigutang, Tsöna, and Lhagyari were part of Lhoka and were under the Lhoji.

> said to sell them things . . . they did not have the money to pay us. We had to give them foodstuffs. . . .
>
> When they were at Drigu, we sent a lot of tsamba. For example, the four dzongs of Dakpo and Kongpo, sent them, I think, sixty or seventy yaks for meat. Then we [the dzong heads] asked the better-off families to give tsamba since we, the heads of Lhapsö, could not [give from the taxes we collected], since we had to deliver that income to the Tseja Office [in Lhasa].[36] So we asked the well-off families [to provide this]. For example, we had a very rich family called Gödön. . . . This family and the Lhapsö tsodrag named Debor each gave 500 khe of barley.[37] After that, the other better-off families gave 20, 30 and up to 100 khe. The barley was ground into tsamba and transported in woolen sacks from one satsig (corv*ée*) relay station to the next. . . . Then all the other areas of Lhoka agreed to send things.
>
> Q, So was this sold or what?
>
> A. It was said that it was sold, but there was no money to collect when it was "sold." They [the Khambas] were only men and horses [i.e., they had no fields], so there was nothing to do but to feed them.[38]

Chimi Gombo also said that he and the other dzong heads and officials wanted to make a formal agreement with Chushigandru to protect the locals. They suggested that they would appoint local stewards (Tib. nyerpa) to be responsible exclusively for providing grain and other needed things to the Chushigandru tsondzin managers, rather than have individual Khambas deal with individual village households directly. Chimi Gombo explained this tactfully,

> It was not that we couldn't support them [the Khambas], but in order to avoid the Khambas using [taking] things in a way that they [the local Tibetans] would feel regret, [we thought that] if the tsodrag of the dzong and the estates worked together with the Khambas, [it would be good.] So we told them that we will satisfy your needs if the stewards from both sides would work together. That way things could be used economically and we could avoid unnecessary expenditures [extractions] and the peasants would not have troubles.[39]

The Khambas, however, thought that was too constraining and refused.[40]

Another Tibetan, Amdo Gyetong, who worked as a trader for Shakabpa in Kalimpong, also commented on the Khambas and food,

> Q. From Lhasa, a lot of the Chushigandru went to Drigutang and Lhagyari, right? So how did they procure their food?

---

[36] The earlier statement that Phala had informed the local dzong head to covertly give them government grain, therefore, was not true.

[37] Tsodrag were important local families that provided officials for the dzong.

[38] Chimi Gombo, interview, India, 1993, H.0022.02.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

> A. They didn't have much money to buy things, so they went ahead and took the fodder for the horses and mules from the miser.
>
> Q. Did the government through Phala Drönyerchemmo say anything to the miser about this [being okay]?
>
> A. Oh, he wouldn't be able to say that. That would be very difficult.
>
> Q. So is it right that they just used force and took those things?
>
> A. It became something like that. The miser had to give them things because they were afraid. On the one hand, they [the locals] were afraid of the Chinese, and on the other hand, they were afraid of Chushigandru, so they had to give them the things they wanted. The good Khambas really did well, but there were also false Chushigandru [Tib. dzüma] who robbed things and did all the bad things. The main leader of this was a person from Derge. I forgot his name, but later Andru Jinda and they caught him and executed him.[41]

Chimi Gombo also commented on the abuses done by Chushigandru, but he did not pass these off as being done by "fake" Chushigandru fighters.

> There were different people like riders and muleteers who took some weapons and horses and mules [from locals], and there was also misbehavior and even raping of women, [but] these things are expected, isn't it? They [Chushigandru headquarters] were trying their best to put a stop to these things, but there was no way they [Chushigandru] could pay according to the [real] price. So it was [just] *said* that these were paid for.[42]

Phu Dündül Chöyin was the top official in Phembar Dzong, the locality where Gombo Tashi ended up staying after being defeated in Nyemo, so he dealt closely with Gombo Tashi and his fighters from when they first arrived in his area in 1958. He recalled, "When the Khambas were traveling to and from raids, et cetera, they stole horses and mules from the locals, as well as food. Sometimes they paid a low price, and sometimes they gave the locals receipts for these that said they would be paid when Tibet became independent, but mostly they just took it, saying this is for the "defense of religion." In addition, some Khambas also stole valuable things like necklaces and raped women.[43]

Similarly, the head of Lhagyari, a famous aristocratic family descended from the ancient kings and a Tibetan government official, also discussed the excesses of the Chushigandru Khambas who used his estate in Lhoka as one of their main bases,

> A. While I was living in Lhagyari, Chushigandru started and then came to the Lhagyari area and told us to sell them barley, butter and lend them horses and mules. The Khambas also went to the people to bother them a little bit, and they took away

---

[41] Gyetong, interview, India, 1993, H.0026.01.

[42] Chimi Gombo, interview, India, 1993, H.0022.02 (emphasis added).

[43] Phu Dündül Chöying, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0005.01.

> butter, meat, and such things. Some of them were paid for with money and some of them were not. The worse ones also came to the houses and robbed their gold and silverware and guns.
>
> Q. At that time, when the Khambas came, did the people think that they were opposing the Chinese so they should support them?
>
> A. When the Khambas came, they didn't do things well. If they had come there in a decent manner, of course, the people would have supported them because Chushigandru's goal was to oppose the Chinese, not the Tibetan government's politics. But when they came, they were indeed Khambas [i.e., they were true to the Khambas' rough and violent reputation] and they didn't have any political ideology; they just took away fodder and food from the miser by force and they also robbed the better horses and mules. They also told the miser to sell guns and they didn't make the full payment. Therefore, the people in the Lhoka area were afraid of the Khambas, because they made them feel uncomfortable/unsafe. . . .
>
> Q. Didn't the Lhagyari family specifically support the Khambas?
>
> A. Yes, we did. We gave them barley, butter, horses, and mules. When five hundred or six hundred riders would come, they took away five or six guns and robbed many horses.
>
> Q. Did they just take them away?
>
> A. They told us to sell them horses and gave back to us their exhausted horses. So they rode our horses that had good sheen and they just went through the motions of paying a little bit for the horses and left us their exhausted ones. They were saying. "We are the Volunteer Army for Defending Religion [Tib. densung tanglang mag]. We are not working for the Chinese." Like this, they kind of boasted. But the people knew what they had robbed from them and they didn't know about how religion would flourish in the future, so there were some problems between them and the people, and people were not relaxed [were uneasy]. That is why when the democratic reforms were implemented [in 1959 after the revolt failed] the people rose up all of a sudden and at the many struggle sessions that were held, the people said, "What the so-called Volunteer Army for Defending the Religion that was incited by the Tibetan government did was to rob grain, and rape and beat people. They were not reliable."
>
> Q. So the people didn't like them, right?
>
> A. Yes. At that time, all of the thirty-two servants of Lhagyari had guns like Mauser pistols and some other good guns, and some of the Khambas robbed the guns and some of them just paid a little bit for them.[44]

A number of the Chushigandru members and leaders we interviewed also commented on this. Bisu, the most famous Central Tibetan (from Shigatse) who was part of Chushigandru in Lhoka, for example, said tersely,

---

[44] Lhagyari, interview, India, 1992, H.0025.02.

> When I arrived at Drigu, there was nothing; there was no tsamba to eat. The only thing we could do was to rob from the miser and the miser were extremely frightened. . . . We thought that the misers would come to us, but they didn't.[45]

And when he was asked where Chushigandru got the food and fodder for their men and horses and mules, he explained,

> A. Mostly it was stolen or collected from the people.
>
> Q, But you would not be able to keep on doing that there [over a long time], right?
>
> A. Yes, that's why it was said that the Khambas' work didn't have an end [Tib. shugu]. They didn't have any plan, and it was like doing things with one's eyes closed.[46]

An interesting example of the casual nature of horse and mule theft during the Nyemo campaign was narrated by Jama Ngagdrug, a Chushigandru officer from Targye Gomba in Sichuan. He recalled,

> Some of our soldiers, acting like bandits, took fifteen horses that had been left in a pasture called Sinde Nara for grazing. Later, we came to know that those horses belonged to the [famous] Karmapa [Lama], so we had to return them, because we were telling people that we are fighting for religion, so we shouldn't take the Karmapa Lama's horses. Andru Jinda [Gombo Tashi] told Gyado Thöndrub, Phurba Trinley, and me to go and return Karmapa's horses but bring all the other horses that were in Sinde Nara. After that, about one hundred riders went with us to Sinde Nara . . . where the horses and the mules of traders were being left for grazing. We were told to bring all the horses that were grazing in that place, which totaled about two hundred horses and mules. I sent about forty riders on one side and forty riders on the other side and twenty-five riders behind to move the horses. . . . On the next day, when I got to the regiment, it was almost sunset. I told Andru Jindag that there were about two hundred horses and mules there and that I had brought all of them. Jindag said "Well done! This is like what is written in the Gesar's Story where they brought horses [Tib. ge sar rta 'ded].[47]

Some of the worst abuses of the local miser occurred in Kongpo at the hands of the Derge regiment, which was under the command of Jagö Namgyal Dorje. Chimi Gombo, the dzong head mentioned above, recalled a firsthand incident that illustrates the problems that even the top Tibetan government officials like himself experienced from Jagö,

---

[45] Bisu, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0063.03.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Jama Ngagdrug, interview, India, 2003, H.0229.01.

> The Derge Khambas came to Dakpo in the third and fourth [lunar] month [1958], so [the miser] there experienced a lot of hardships.[48] They were telling us [the dzong heads] to come and arrange the taxes [for giving things to the Khambas]. We said don't talk like that to us, but look after yourselves. The Khambas were staying at Lhagyari and Drigu, and all the routes they used passed by us [our area]. We said that since we are located on the road, you have been robbing our miser. We even got into sort of an argument about this, because the fighters were causing some hardships. At that time, Jagö Namgyal Dorji and his commanders were there, and they had robbed some of our miser. When we tried to talk to Namgyal Dorje about this, there was no way to talk to him. When we told him that this was no way for his soldiers to act, he just got up and walked out. Baba Chandzö Tashi and some Lithangpas were there [with the Derge regiment] so we asked them what do you think we should do, because when we tried to talk to him, he acted like that. They said there is nothing to do. What is there to do? We will try and talk tactfully to him. So there were some prominent people in their group and unless they did the talking, at that time there was no way for us to talk to Jagö Namgyal Dorje. He would just get up and leave without listening.

Drakten also recalled hearing about an encounter illustrating the bad relations between Jagö and the local officials/populace regarding supplies.

> It was said that Jagö Namgyal Dorje said . . . in Dakpo, in Kunam Dzong, that he needed five hundred yaks along with 500 khe of butter and that much barley grain. I don't know if it was exactly 500 khe. That is an example. The local headmen were all approached and they said, "Yes. We have to give that to you, but we don't have that much to give. We can't empty everything, but we agree that it is important and we must endeavor to help the battle fund." So they said they wanted [to give only] a reduced amount. That's when Jagö Namgyal Dorje said, "The communists, you know, are chopping the roots! You know that! So we are fighting to stop them from cutting down the tree. We are asking you to give us the fruits of the tree and you are amazed! It is one year's fruit. It will grow next year too! But if the root is cut, then there isn't any (more to come)." So what he was saying is that you have to just hand over the things we need and don't talk too much, otherwise you risk your life.[49]

Urgyen Tsering, a Tibetan who was working with the Jenkhentsisum organization (JKTS) in India, returned from Lhasa to Kalimpong in late 1958 and commented to them about the situation with Chushigandru,

> In Chushigandru, there was a group who were doing an excellent job. There was another group of false Chushigandru. The organizational structure of Chushigandru was not good since each group had their own chief [Tib. pön]. In the villages, the

---

[48] As will be seen in chapter 10, the Derge force refused to operate under the leadership of the Military Headquarters in Drigu and Lhagyari, so was functioning at that time as an autonomous military unit.

[49] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.04.

> *Chushigandru people who were not part of the main group raped the women. So when it was said that the Chushigandru were coming, people used to hide their women.* It was no problem to exchange horses for food, and they did that, but there were many forceful things done and a lot of problems occurred. So we in Kalimpong were saying that the situation is such and such; and that in the main camp of Chushigandru, we need to advise them and make some publicity, since they are getting a bad reputation by doing things like robbing and raping women. So someone had to go from here [from JKTS in Kalimpong, to tell them this]. So Kunga Wangdü had to go. So there was a lot of news arriving saying that Chushigandru was doing many lawless things.[50]

Finally, the recollection of a Sera monk when he was fleeing from Lhasa after the revolt in 1959 also conveys vividly the negative feeling that the Khamba excesses produced in many of the local people.

> At that time, Chushigandru and the people in Lhoka were not getting along well. In Wön, there was a *ledrung* (clerk) called Tamdrin who was related to Kungö Trekhang. I had a very good yellowish horse that I had bought from that ledrung. However, when we arrived at Wön, it was dark and snowing, and we didn't know the way to the ledrung's house. So I told my partners, "If I let my horse's reins go loose, it will lead us to his house." I did, and my horse did lead us to his house and we stayed there overnight.
>
> There were twelve or thirteen monks with me, and the ledrung wanted us to stay there [not go to India], saying, "The Khambas are bullying us [Tib. nyegö] and they aren't leaving us alone." At first, I agreed to stay there, but later when we saw that all the people [from Lhasa] were crossing the river [going south to India], we couldn't risk staying there, so I told the clerk, "First, all the people are crossing the river, so we can't risk staying here. Second, you and the people in this area are not planning to make war [to fight against the Chinese]. You are just looking at the situation and you are not planning to help us [who are opposed to the Chinese]. It doesn't seems that you think the war is being made for the benefit of the nation. It seems you are thinking that the war is being made against us, and you don't have anything to do with it."
>
> Then the ledrung replied, "I will tell you this, but don't tell anybody. We are thinking that it would be better if Chushigandru would *not win the war* because they have been bullying us so severely that the way that the kudrak bullied the people in the past seems like just playing around. Chushigandru has robbed money, coral, turquoise, amber, pearls, horses, and even women. So the people will not help them in making war. When they force us to send people, we have no choice but to go. Nobody dares to say no, but we definitely won't go voluntarily." When I heard this I became quite dispirited. If all the people in that area have the same pain [in their minds] as this clerk, we won't be able to get through this [war successfully]. The people in Lhoka were not going to help us at all [voluntarily].[51]

---

50. Urgyen Tsering, interview, Nepal, 1994, H.0051.01 (emphasis added). See also chapter 10 for comment on the deteriorating command structure after Gombo Tashi was unable to return from Nyemo.

51. Ngawang Temba, interview, India, 1994, H.0061.03.

There is no way to assess how frequent such excesses were, but they are mentioned in many interviews such as those cited above, so they were clearly not rare. Moreover, since some of these excesses were being reported to the Tibetan government in Lhasa, Phala and Namseling thought that Namseling would be able to act as a kind of middleman between the Khambas and the locals and work out a system to meet the Khambas needs while also protecting the miser from abuses.

Phala and Namseling also talked about the need to organize local Tibetan militias to augment the Khamba fighters. They felt this was critical, because they believed there was no way a few thousand Khambas could defeat the Chinese in Tibet, even if Chushigandru received American weapons and assistance. Namseling, therefore, had a vision of recruiting and arming thousands of Central Tibetan militia from Lhoka's villages, but he also understood that these would be hard to recruit and motivate if the locals had negative feelings toward the Khambas. Interestingly, although Namseling's covert mission was secret, the following street song appeared about it in Lhasa:

Andru Gombo Tashi
Went to Tsetang.
Protective deity Namseling
Please give [Gombo Tashi] a good prophecy [telling him what to do].[52]

However, sitting in Lhasa and talking about influencing and organizing the Khambas and the locals in Lhoka was a far cry from actually being able to have any impact on the ground in Lhoka—as Namseling would quickly find out.

NAMSELING IN LHOKA

Namseling and Samjor left Lhasa in mid October 1958, crossing the Lhasa River by coracles at the Ramagang ferry site, while their servants and pack animals crossed using the new Kuru Bridge. Including servants and muleteers, their group consisted of about thirty to forty riders.

After crossing the Yarlungtsangpo River, they reached Chongye Riudechen and saw seventy or eighty Khamba riders in the distance. These Khambas were unsure whether this large group of horsemen was hostile or friendly, so they immediately spread out into a battle-ready formation. In response, Namseling stopped and sent his Litang bodyguard Dündrül to ride ahead to meet them and explain who they were. Dündrül brought back some of the Chushigandru leaders to meet with Namseling and Samjog, who told them that their headquarters was then at Tsöna, which was south of Drigutang, and that he and his men were on their way to attack Tsetang, the main Chinese administrative center in Lhoka.[53]

---

[52] Seysey, interview, India, 1991, H.0042.01; Ngawang Temba, interview, India, 1994, H.0061.03. In Tibetan: a 'brug mgon po bkra shis/ rtsed thang gzhung la phebs song/ chos skyong rnam sras gling pa/ lung bstan yag po skyon rog.

Namseling told the Khambas not to attack Tsetang now and to lay low for the time being, presumably until he could talk with Chushigandru's main leaders, but they were not interested. Namseling's bodyguard Dündrül recalled that he explained to Namseling, "We [Khambas] don't know much politics, right? And so they are thinking, 'Today we just have to fight and just they went headlong into it' (laughs)."[54] Seysey, a Chushigandru commander who was part of that attack group, also recalled, "When they first met me they said that they were sent by the Government to negotiate, but they did not plan on returning to Lhasa.[55]

Namseling and his delegation went on to the main Chushigandru headquarters and met with Jangtsa Chöndze, Chamdo Dotse, and Kyamgön Chandzö, the leaders Gombo Tashi left in charge, but did not get a good welcome. In general, Khambas stereotypically considered Tibetan government officials weak and sympathetic to the Chinese, and having to give them the Kashag's edict made things even harder for Namseling, since the Khambas hated its message, which was basically the same as that of the first delegation. The insurrection was underway and the American were training Khambas, so they were not in the least interested in giving this up to return to live in socialist Sichuan. So basically, from the start, Namseling and Samjog were not trusted, and because Gombo Tashi, his close friend, was not there, there was no one of stature among the Khamba to vouch for him. Radru Ngawang explained this,

> Andru Jinda was not there, so just a few people knew about them. Everyone didn't know how it came about that these two aristocrats were sent and whether they were good or bad. It was like the proverb, "A person who is white on the outside, but is black inside."[56] At that time, the people from Eastern Tibet were saying that the Tibetan government is sending us such a bad edict. So the people who didn't know the internal relations [between Gombo Tashi and Phala and Namseling] were again very disappointed. At that point, they were saying that the government sent Namseling and Samjog to tell us that we are not allowed to fight.[57]

For his part, Namseling was taken aback by the reaction to him, but also by the situation he encountered at the main base. He later told Shatra, a well-known aristocratic official, about what he saw, "When we went to Drigutang we expected to find a fully fortified military encampment, but to our surprise it was like going to a picnic with some tents here and there. No defenses."[58]

---

[53] Dündrül, interview, India,1994, H.0058.01.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Seysey, interview, India, 1991, H.0042.01.

[56] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992. (H.0012.01). In Tibetan: phyi phyi mi dkar, nang nang mi nag. This is a saying that refers to someone who looks good on the outside, but is bad on the inside. In this case it meant the government officials were black (really bad) on the inside.

[57] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.02.

Soon after Namseling arrived in Tsöna, Chushigandru Headquarters moved to E Lhagyari because of fodder issues. The regiment was set up in Drigu in summer so they could graze their horses and mules on the high pastures and mountainsides, but as winter approached the horses and the mules didn't have enough grass to eat there, so they had to go to a farming area where they could get hay [after the harvest]. So the regiment moved to Tsöna and then to Lhagyari.[59]

Namseling, however, stayed in Lhüntse in the southern part of Lhoka for about six months trying to work with local officials to organize food transfers and to start to recruit a large local militia. Chimi Gombo, the head of Lhapsö Dzong, recalled Namseling telling him, "We must help them [the Khambas] or otherwise they will rob the miser."[60] Radru Ngawang also recalled that Namseling and Samjog were worried about the Khambas' excesses. "At that time, when Chushigangdru was engaged in taking food and other items from the miser, the two of them [Namseling and Samjorla] were telling people [the Khambas] that this kind of behavior will not be okay. [But] they were also telling the miser that it will not be okay if you don't make preparations to meet the needs of the Khambas. When I got there [two months after Namseling, in December 1958], those two were sort of mediating between Chushigandrug and the miser."[61]

The Khambas, however, were not paying attention to Namseling, so he is said to have sent Phala a letter about the problems he was facing.

> I heard that Namseling wrote a letter to Phala saying, "The military regulations of Chushigangdru were not being adhered to well. And while America has given a little amount of aid to Athar and Lotse, that was not beneficial for many people. Consequently, it won't be okay if we don't make a new plan, but I can't do anything because Chushigangdrug is not getting along well internally"[62]

At about the same time, in distant Shotalhosum, Gombo Tashi was regrouping what was left of his original force. Gombo Tashi's defeats in Nyemo forced him to abandon his planned return to Lhoka from Shang Ganden Chöngor. As mentioned in chapter 6, the PLA not only blocked his access to the ferry sites along the Yarlungtsangpo River near Nyemo, but were attacking him from three sides trying to surround and destroy him. Gombo Tashi, however, was able to redirect his mounted fighters and escape the PLA by moving north and then east through Yangbajen, Lake Namtso, and Reting to Drigung, all the while fighting skirmishes with the pursuing PLA. Ultimately, when he reached a remote area called Sateng Dzong in the region known as Shotalhosum, the PLA suddenly stopped its pursuit and returned to their bases. This would have been in October.

---

[58] Shatra, interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0023.06.

[59] Athar, interview, India, 1995, H.0007.06.

[60] Chimi Gombo, interview, India, 1993, H.0022.03.

[61] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.01.

[62] Abo Rapgye, interview, India, 1992, H.0029.01.

Shotalhosum had been under the administration of the Tibetan government until 1950, when the Chinese took military control of the whole Chamdo area and set up the Chamdo Liberation Committee (Tib. Chamdo jingdrü uyön lhengang). It remained under the Chamdo Liberation Committee rather than the Tibetan (local) government until after the uprising, but like the areas still under Lhasa, it had not undergone democratic reforms when Gombo Tashi arrived there so was still being administered by local officials, landlords, and traditional customs. Consequently, the people of Shotalhosum were basically living their lives as they had before 1950–51.

Phu Dündül Chöying, the head of Pembar Dzong in Shotalhosum, explained in an interview,

> Q. At this time, was there any talk of land reforms?
>
> A. No. Things had remained the same as before and there hadn't been any damage done. In the beginning, all the people in Pembar liked the Chinese a little bit because in the old society there were whippings and taxes, but now everything was bought with dayan coins. . . .[63]
>
> They (the Chinese) said that we, the People's Liberation Army, have come from a long distance and don't have many horses and mules, so we couldn't bring our grain right away. However, we won't impose taxes on the populace [to get our needs met for free]. But can you sell us grain and yaks from your area? Finally, they said that they needed two hundred yaks and 4,000 khe of barley and they paid one dayan coin for each khe of barley. For the best yaks, they paid thirteen dayan, while the smaller ones got seven dayan. I returned home and sold them 1,000 khe of barley [myself] while the rest was sold by other people. Then we transported this to Shopando Dzong [where a large PLA unit was based]. . . . I did all the local work like helping the People's Liberation Army to buy meat, butter, and barley and fodder and over 10,000 khe of barley was sold. . . .[64]

Phu Dündül Chöying also recalled Gombo Tashi's arrival,

> Gombo Tashi's troops came [here] in the ninth Tibetan month [which started on 13 October 1958]. He had sent two hundred fighters to take over Lho Dzong. . . . And then his forces took over the entire area of the three dzongs of Shotalhosum. . . .
>
> Q. Were there any People's Liberation Army in these three dzongs?
>
> A. No. They had left earlier and had handed over everything to the dzong [to the local Tibetan officials], so we were doing all the work of [administering] the dzongs. Because of this, they [Gombo Tashi/Chushigandru] could go and do whatever they wanted. . . . After they took Lho Dzong, they [contacted us in Pembar and] wanted

---

[63] Phu Dündül Chöying, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0005.01.

[64] Ibid.

> us to make relations [an alliance] with them. At this time, . . . we [the leaders] didn't dare tell the populace not to have relations with Gombo Tashi, because compared to the populace, the Khambas were very powerful. Our miser had no guns and didn't know how to shoot, and we didn't have united leadership. . . . [However,] the masses didn't want to ally themselves with Gombo Tashi, . . . so if we had told them not to make relations, they would have done that right away. But we [the leaders] were afraid [of the Khambas] because the People's Liberation Army was located far away. Consequently, we made relations [allied ourselves] with them. I met with Karu pön [an important leader from Khyungpo Tengchen regarding this] and then we and the people from the dzong sent a letter to Andrutsang Gombo Tashi saying we will support you. After he received the letter, he came in person to Pembar Dzong.
>
> Q. Did you say [in the letter] that you are going to oppose and expel the Chinese?
>
> A. Yes.[65]

This solved the issue of securing a stable source of food and other supplies that Gombo Tashi and his men needed, as Phu Dündül Chöying further explained.

> After we made relations with them, [we told them that] there was some leftover grain in Lho Dzong and Shopando Dzong that the People's Liberation Army hadn't used [when they were there in 1950–51], so they used that grain and secured their remaining needs from the populace. I also gave them grain. Anyway, at that time, they not only had barley for themselves to eat, but they had barley to feed their 1,400 horses.
>
> Q. When Gombo Tashi took over the three dzongs, did you get any correspondence from the Chamdo Liberation Committee, for example, saying don't join with Gombo Tashi and we will send troops?
>
> A. No, nothing like that happened. We received nothing from them. Communications between us and Chamdo was hard as it was a long distance—a twelve-day ride—and there wasn't a single Chinese in the area between us and Chamdo. So we [the leaders] didn't dare to make relations [with the Chinese in Chamdo about Gombo Tashi]. There wasn't anybody making relations with Chamdo from either our dzong or from Shopando. However, in Lho Dzong, the acting dzongpön and the nephew of the main abbot . . . made connections with Chamdo and spread rumors that the PLA was coming here. They thought that if they said this, Gombo Tashi would get afraid and flee. Gombo Tashi heard this, but instead of fleeing, sent two hundred of his fighters towards Chamdo to intercept the PLA troops. When they met no one, they returned to Lho Dzong. Gombo Tashi now knew that what they had reported was a lie, so he killed them and took away a lot of wealth from their households. . . .
>
> Q. What was your goal when you decided to send the letter of unity saying you will fight against the Chinese? They had 4–5 million soldiers, while Gombo Tashi had only 500–600 fighters? Did you think a foreign country would help, or what?
>
> A. Andrutsang had said that a foreign country's support was coming and that it had [already] air-dropped weapons in Lhoka.
>
> Q. Did he tell you this in person or write this in the letter?

---

[65] Ibid.

> A. He said this at the meeting where we signed [the document] to have unity with him. They [Khambas] had some guns and a few small hand grenades with them that [they said] had been dropped by an airplane. He showed us this at the meeting.
>
> Q. Was Andrutsang talking about uniting all of Tibet to fight the Chinese, or was he interested only in all the Khambas getting united and fighting?
>
> A. He told us, "Now we must fight the Chinese, and we Khambas must take the lead in this. If we cooperate with the Tibetan government, the only way to go is on the path of doing the reforms [i.e., they will not fight against the Chinese]. If we Khambas ourselves oppose the Chinese, foreign assistance will come to help us." . . .
>
> Q. Did you people in Pembar Dzong have greater loyalty towards the Khambas or towards the Tibetan government? . . .
>
> A. Deep down in our hearts, we didn't really trust the Khambas, and the populace was thinking and saying things like they [Khambas] will not be able to carry this through to the end [that is, be successful], and it is not right to oppose the [Chinese] government. But the people like us who had the power, we just suppressed them [the masses] and they didn't have the strength to oppose us. All of us leaders didn't realize that it was only the Khambas doing this [that they had no foreign help]. . . . We did a lot, but we didn't have good luck. After we signed the unity oath, we conscripted five hundred "troops" from our three dzongs. . . . Then we [Gombo Tashi and us] went to make war in Powo Tramog, which is east of the bend of the Yarlungtsangpo River (see map 2).[66]

Meanwhile, in India, JKTS was continuing its activities with the GOI while also continuing to try to publicize the Tibetan cause internationally. In January 1958, they scored a major coup when they secured a private meeting with Prime Minister Nehru and other top leaders in Delhi to try to obtain additional support from India for their organization and for the Tibetan cause.

LUKHANGWA MEETS NEHRU IN NEW DELHI

Jenkhentsisum, with the help of Apa Pant, the political officer in Sikkim, had spent months working out the details for this visit, and were finally successful in arranging for Lukhangwa, the former Acting Prime Minister (Tib. sitsab), to go to Delhi to meet with Prime Minister Nehru on 13 January 1958, together with his translator Lhalungpa. Unfortunately for JKTS, this did not go well. Nehru thought Lukhangwa's long narration of the case for Tibetan independence was totally unrealistic, and he made it clear that India would not help them to achieve their goal. Nehru was even more negative and frank than he had been the year before when he met with the Dalai Lama.

Nehru basically thought the old society was anachronistic in today's modern world and had to change, and he said that independence was totally out of the question. Tibet had to work within the Chinese state and seek only full autonomy while making major changes itself to its socioeconomic system. The contrast between Lukhangwa's naïve optimism about Tibet's genuine independence and Nehru's realpolitik views typifies the lack of progress JKTS had made with the GOI.

---

[66] Ibid.

Nehru's attitude toward Tibet was tersely explained in a note he sent that same day to Foreign Secretary Dutt, who was himself meeting with Lukhangwa the next day,

> The ex-Prime Minister of Tibet came to see me this evening. He read out a long story of the sufferings of the Tibetans and their wanting independence and India's help to obtain it. This itself took a long time and I had no more time to spare. *I told him briefly that it was folly to think of defeating China by armed force, that India could not supply any arms, that Tibet had become so backward that change had become imperative. If the Tibetans did not change themselves, the change would come from outside. There was no possibility of putting the clock back and reverting to the previous State of Tibet remaining there.*
>
> Briefly my advice was that the Tibetans should keep united and claim full autonomy. *They should not challenge China's overall sovereignty. If they stood for autonomy and were united, they would be able to retain their way of life and at the same time they should try to introduce reforms.* I told him that he could speak at greater length to the Foreign Secretary. I understand he is seeing you tomorrow.[67]

Lukhangwa's translator, Lhalungpa, also recalled this meeting and Nehru's tough advice,

> The Sitsab and I went to Delhi to see Pandit Nehru. We talked about Tibetan history for about two hours. Nehru listened to our report carefully and then said,
>
> > "I understand the situation completely. As you have said, Tibet was an independent [country] in history, so it certainly may be independent [again]. But from the vantage point of current international law, nobody accepts Tibet as an independent [country]. So it is a little hard [to do something] on the legal side. And there is nothing much to argue about because the Chinese have already taken over Tibet. So now the most important thing is that you should do the local work. The Chinese are saying that they are going to let you do the work of administrating Tibet. It is very important to do the internal struggle tactfully. You should do it through non-violent action. If you use violence, the Chinese will eliminate the Tibetans. *We are not planning to give you any military support. If you do it through peaceful means, we will help you on all aspects.*"
>
> At that time, India knew that it is quite hard for India because Tibet had been lost and the Indians also saw very strongly that it was harmful for them because the Chinese had taken over Tibet. So Pandit Nehru said, "Now, there is not much to do. We have to make our own defenses stronger and we have to have strong relations with the Tibetans."[68]

---

67. Note to Foreign Secretary S. Dutt, 13 January 1958, cited in Mukherjee and Mukherjee 2010, 671.

68. Lhalungpa, interview, USA, 1994, H.0082.01.

Lhalungpa added that even with respect to publicity, Mullik, the head of IB, the Indian CIA, told JKTS and the exiles to tone it down.

> At that time, we couldn't do that much publicity because the Indian Government was supervising us. The head of the spies came to see us and said, "You people should not do anything that causes problems between India and China. Now the relationship between India and China is good, so whatever you do, you should do it tactfully. He warned us like this.[69]

Shakabpa's diary gives more detail on what Lukhangwa said to Nehru and Foreign Minister Dutt.

> 13 January 1958: Lukhangwa sees Nehru at his house at 7 P.M. along with the interpreter Lhalungpa. Lukhangwa told [Nehru] in brief about how the Chinese had oppressed Tibet and then said, "Please help us so that the Chinese will not arrest and harm the Tibetan people led by His Holiness, who have loyalty towards the Tibetan system of joint religious and secular rule. In case this happens, please support us according to the wishes of the people no matter where our destiny will lead us, even to the worse end.
>
> "First of all, since Pandit Nehru has profound knowledge, it is well known that you have strived and you are still striving for world peace and you have helped and are still helping all the small countries who were suppressed by big countries. Tibet is also a part of the world and it is a religious and independent country that shares a border with India. Please talk with the Chinese so that Tibet can regain its freedom.
>
> "Another request is that the Sikkim political officer has visited Tibet several times, so please let him remain in office until Tibet gains its independence. The smaller Indian officials are bothering [Tib. süntser] the Tibetan people living in India, so please order them to let the Tibetan people stay at ease [Tib. döde]. Please appoint a separate Indian representative to whom we can report in detail about how the Chinese have suppressed us and about the situation that Tibet is free."
>
> Nehru replied, "I know in detail about the Chinese aggression and the fighting in Kham. In the past, I spoke many times with Zhou Enlai about not reforming Tibet and I will continue to do that. Regarding detailed discussions, I will tell Foreign Minister Dutt, so please speak in detail with him."
>
> 14 January 1958: 12 P.M. Lukhangwa, Khendrung, Khenjung, Shakabpa, and three representatives went to see Dutt. Acharya [Kripalani] was present. Lukhangwa said, "I was told by the leaders of the Tibetan Buddhist Affairs Association [Tib. phögi tendon tsogpa] to tell Pandit Nehru about the situation of Tibet. However, since Pandit Nehru was very busy, we requested that he appoint a representative [to deal with us], and he said he will ask you to do that. I am sure he did."

The Foreign Minister said, "Regarding Tibet, last year when His Holiness came to India, he had a long talk with Prime Minister Nehru, who told him that Tibet and India can have direct cultural relations, but if you are not careful in doing this, it could become an obstacle [Tib. gagkyen]. The GOI can never militantly assist you. [And] if other foreign countries help Tibet, Chinese aggression will increase. The Tibetans in India are not allowed to take part in political activities. We sympathize with the rebellion in Tibet and the struggle in Kham, but we don't have anything to say about your actions in Tibet. Nehru gave us no instructions. [He said] that regarding the Tibetan situation, talk with Acharya, since he does the Tibet and China work.[70]

---

[69] Ibid.

Jenkhentsisum's impressive success at securing meetings with Nehru and other top GOI officials like Dutt proved very disappointing and disheartening. As had occurred when the Dalai Lama was in India, these top Indian leaders indicated clearly that India was neither willing to support the Tibetan cause militarily nor willing to support Tibetan independence politically. Nehru and Dutt also warned the émigrés not to try to use force against the Chinese and made it clear that India would not permit itself to be used as a safe haven for Tibetan insurgents nor as a conduit for covert supplies and weapons. However, despite this setback in India, as will be seen in chapter 10, later in 1958 Chushigandru got a major shot in the arm from an American decision to start to ship them arms.

---

[70] Shakabpa diary, entries for 13 and 14 January 1958.

10

Chushigandru after Shang Ganden Chöngor

THE CIA'S FIRST AIRDROP OF WEAPONS

After Frank Holober's debriefing of Litang Athar and Gyalo Thondup in Calcutta in fall 1958 (see chapter 5), Athar returned to Lhoka and Holober returned to Langley, where he pushed for the United States to start providing arms and supplies to the Khambas. Holober said that he didn't have to argue hard at Langley, because the CIA was eager to support the Khambas' revolt in both Central Tibet and Sichuan. He explained,

> Nothing much happened [before the Calcutta debriefing] because of the State Department's insistence that we get the Dalai Lama's request for assistance. Of course, that was not forthcoming, and that [issue] dragged things on for quite a while [in Tibet]. In fact, we had to go back two times [had to wire instructions twice to Athar and Lotse about this] to try to get that message through [to the Dalai Lama]. Athar and Lotse had been in touch with Gombo Tashi, and then through Phala that request was forwarded, and of course the Dalai Lama said no. . . . He would not give us a request. That was very firm. . . .
>
> [However,] eventually reports were coming back from Gombo [via Athar and Lotse] . . . that kept asking [for help] because they were making good contacts and they wanted some assistance. . . .[1]

Holober argued effectively that since the Khambas had already set up military headquarters in Lhoka, they were going to attack the Chinese in Tibet regardless of U.S. help, so any assistance the U.S. government could provide would make them more effective and thereby enhance America's anti-Chinese-Communist-Party strategy. This argument also worked to assuage much of the apprehension within the CIA that this could devolve into another humiliating Hungarian debacle, since the CIA would just be helping an insurgency that was already underway, not fomenting an uprising.[2] So, Holober said, "We finally got a go [for an arms drop], basically thanks to Des FitzGerald and General . . . [name unclear on tape], and [also] Allen Dulles with John Foster [Dulles, Secretary of State]. Anyway, that's when we started."[3] Approval was also received for training for a second group of Tibetan insurgents in the United States.[4]

---

[1] Frank Holober, interview, USA, 1993.

The CIA officers working with the initial group of Khamba trainees had pushed for providing the Tibetans new, higher quality arms, but in Washington it was decided against this, and the main part of the first shipment, therefore, consisted of Lee-Enfield rifles like the ones they already had, rather than the more modern semiautomatic M-1 carbine that had been used by the U.S. Army in World War II. This, of course, was done to allow Washington plausible deniability, since these older weapons had been in use in Tibet for decades.[5] Roger McCarthy, who had been the head trainer on Saipan and was a very strong supporter of the Khambas, was angry about the decision to send only older weapons and equipment.[6] He commented on this when I asked him why he thought the Afghans were so successful and the Khambas, who were as brave as anyone, so unsuccessful. He replied,

> The Afghans were very successful because we gave them some very good weaponry. And they, like the Tibetans, knew the areas in which they were operating very well and could use it very effectively, and they had great gobs of support—incredible amounts of support as opposed to us [the CIA in the Tibetan case]. I'm almost ashamed sometimes when I think about it; when I think of what little we really did provide the Tibetans, in particular, in the face of the increasing Chinese strength and firepower and communications. Now, you see, we didn't even give them decent communications capability except for the RS-1, which was capabile of communicating long distances in shortwave Morse-code-type things with codebooks and all that, but we did not give them any tactical radios, which put them at a terrible disadvantage. They only had horseback communications. We had to make a decision as to whether we were going to load the planes up with batteries to keep the tactical radios of some kind such as a PRC10 going with batteries, since they had no way to replace these themselves. So that was a tough call. . . .[7]

---

[2] Ibid.

[3] Roger McCarthy, phone conversation, USA, 1995.

[4] McCarthy 1997, 242.

[5] Holober, interview, USA, 1993.

[6] Roger McCarthy, phone conversation, USA, 1995.

[7] Ibid.

> Going back through it all, I think we would have done a lot of things differently had we known more about what was going on inside. That is always the case, but we really didn't know that much and were going almost by feel without much knowledge from the inside. Until the guys [Athar and Lotse] got in there, we didn't have any information coming out to speak of. And I think we would have provided, uh, we had a lot of opposition to even moving from the Lee-Enfield up to an M-1 rifle [in 1959 after the revolt]. That's silly. . . . I probably had a couple of temper tantrums with both Agency people and particularly [with] State, but to no avail.[8]

Once the decision for an airdrop had been made in Washington, the logistical arrangements were finalized by the CIA using an unmarked C-118 transport plane flying from East Pakistan during the full-moon period in mid October 1958.[9] Athar was still on his way back from Calcutta, but Lotse was in Lhoka and received the shipment. Airdrops of weapons were much more complicated than the simple parachuting of Athar and Lotse, because that had been a blind drop with no specific drop site target to hit. With a weapons drop, the drop site had to be precisely coordinated, transport animals had to be available, and the location had to be in a place where there were no Chinese troops nearby. Lotse's explanation of how he arranged that first airdrop reveals a lot of this; at the same time, it also illustrates how unrealistic it would have been to try to supply a large-scale insurgency over an area the size of Tibet solely by air.

> When our [Chushigandru] military headquarters moved from [Drigutang to] Tsöna to Lhagyari, I couldn't send a wireless message for about three days. Then I sent a wireless message saying I have reached such and such a place, and in response I got a message that said, "Assistance from an airplane is coming." However, then the wireless stopped transmitting without saying anything more. So the next day, when we reached a place called Nyenang Shoshar, that evening I climbed up a mountain and sent another wireless message. The response this time was very clear and said, "Do not send a wireless message to us now. We have a lot to tell you, so just listen." And then they sent a long message with much information. Such a long message was very unusual.
>
> I responded that it was becoming dark now, but they told me that I must listen again. So I did, and tried my best to write the two pages of code numbers they sent. Then they said that I had to check the information to see whether it is correct or not, but I had to reply, "I cannot check it because it is dark and I can't see." . . . Again they said I had to listen to a transmission, and they sent two long pages. From the time I arrived in Tibet until then, I hadn't received such a long communication.
>
> After this, I went to my tent and checked the notes [translated the code] . . . whose content said: "A plane will come so provide assistance." It also specified the place,

---

[8] McCarthy 1997, 243. There also were no M-1s in the second drop in February 1959. M-1s were provided only with the airdrops after the Dalai Lama arrived in India on 31 March 1959, that is, after the insurgency in Tibet was basically over. This will be discussed in later chapters.

[9] Cooper 2008. See also Athar, interview, India, 1995, H.0007.06.

date, and the time of the drop and said, "Bring just one partner with you and forty transport animals (horses or mules) to carry the loads that will be dropped. As soon as the things arrive, you must bury them in a safe place. . . . If this secret leaks out, you, Lotse, will be fully responsible for that. Accordingly, you must do your work well and burn all the parachutes."

The place that was mentioned by our teacher [trainer] was located near Drigu Lamathang, which was about three days' journey from Shopashar, the place where we were staying. So that night I arranged to meet privately with Jangtsa Chöndze, the acting leader of our [Chushigandru] military headquarters . . . and told him, "Please keep our military camp [which was in transit to Lhagyari] in this place for several days, because tomorrow I have to wait for a wireless message, and then I will have to send the answer on the same day I receive it. So I have a lot of important things to do." Then I also told him that we are going to be receiving a little aid. Jangtsa Chöndze was extremely glad to hear that and said, "If that is the case, tomorrow I will lead the unit to a place not so distant. You people should say that you have lost your horses and mules, so are staying in this place to look for them, and then do whatever work you have to do."

That night, I worked and didn't sleep for the whole night. While I was preparing the wireless and thinking about the plans, day broke and that morning Jangtsa Chöndze moved his force to the southeast side of Shopashar, while I stayed with my brothers Jayang Wöser, Londen, Chödrag, and Sonam Gombo in that place and went over the wireless messages that they [the CIA] had sent the previous day to understand their content clearly.

Then I sent a wireless to them saying we are going to the place [drop site], but I received no answer. As soon as I sent the wireless, we went to Shopashar and stayed in the military camp. On the next day, we reached E Chundokyang, where I summoned Jangtsa Chöndze and Andru Lobsang, et cetera, for a meeting . . . at which I said, "I am going to take six of my trustworthy people to get these [weapons]. We will need forty horses and mules [to transport the loads that will be dropped], but I don't need them right now. Later I will ask for them."

Jangtsa Chöndze said, "If the plane comes and the support arrives, you must take about three hundred [of our] cavalry with you because it is possible that Chinese soldiers will also come and we will not be able to bear it [losing the weapons]." I told them, "My instructions specified that I am not allowed to tell many people about this, so according to my orders, I am taking only six people." . . . Jangtsa Chöndze replied that he would prepare the forty horses and mules and they would be available whenever I needed them. . . .

So I took six people . . . with me and told the other Khamba fighters that we had lost our horses and mules and we were going out to find them. When we reached Drigutang, I sent a wireless message [to the CIA] telling them to drop the supplies at this place. However, they replied, "We are going to drop the supplies at the place we told you last time."

Right after that, I told the head of the dzong to prepare three messengers for us. Then I wrote a notice [Tib. dayig] saying that about four thousand Chushigandru

> cavalry are coming through Shigatse so you must make preparations for their hay and fodder, and I sent this with the three messengers. Because this message was public, I knew everyone would see it, and I thought that if the Chinese army saw it, even if they had been coming to Lhoka, they might now go back to Shigatse.
>
> Then we left right away and that night reached the designated drop zone. I immediately sent a wireless message saying that we have reached the place and then received a reply saying that that the plane will come at this [such and such] time tonight. . . .
>
> After that, the six of us divided up to get our loads. I sent two people to the mountaintop on this side and two to the other side to spot where the loads landed. The horses and mules, which were loaded with our wireless equipment and all our other things were left with Chödrag. . . . Then I and another person made the fires [at the drop zone] that would signal to the plane that we are here and ready. . . .
>
> About thirty seconds after I received a wireless message, I saw the plane giving the signal, but it didn't make the airdrop and instead seemed to go back. However, after about another thirty seconds, it returned and dropped all its loads. Altogether, nineteen parachutes [with loads] were dropped. There was good moonlight that evening, so we could see things clearly. The loads were parachuted at distances about five hundred meters between the drops. . . .
>
> Then my partners . . . came to where I was, and the four of us collected the loads and sent one person to Drigu Dzong to tell them to send the forty pack animals. . . . We left one person to look after our horses and mules, and we waited there.
>
> The messenger who went to Drigu Dzong returned in the morning and said the forty pack animals are on their way. Then we loaded the forty pack animals and took them back to Drigutang.[10]

This airdrop was, of course, symbolically an extremely important first step, but in and of itself, it was not tactically significant. While it is not known exactly how many weapons were dropped, it is clear that it was a small drop. McCarthy wrote that it totaled only 12,000 pounds,[11] and Athar said that it contained only enough weapons to supply a company of 150 fighters. Apparently it included mainly 100 or so Lee-Enfield (.303) long-barrel rifles [called "tashi kharing"], plus two 57 mm shoulder-held recoilless rifles, 20 Sten guns, 50–60 hand grenades, a few 60 mm mortars, and some Bren guns and bazookas, plus about 15,000 rounds of ammunition of various sorts.[12] As mentioned, none of these weapons were American made, and almost all were already in use in India and Tibet.

Lotse was, therefore, able to retrieve the weapons without any problem, but distributing them to Chushigandru turned out to be complicated. As soon as Lotse was back at Chushigandru's new headquarters in Lhagyari, he put all the weapons in one of the large rooms, and the next day, in the presence of the Chushigandru leaders, he handed over all the loads, one by one. Lotse told the leaders, "The things that I am handing over today are to be used to oppose the Chinese who are the enemy of religion, and to protect the Tibetan people. It is absolutely not permitted for these to be bought and sold for private use or to be used to oppress the populace (miser)." . . . I also told them, "if you don't know how to use the weapons, then you must tell me [and I'll teach you]."[13]

---

[10] Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 39–42.

[11] McCarthy 1997, 242.

[12] Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 42; McCarthy 1997, 242.

The arrival of the weapons, however, led to arguments that reflected a serious internal conflict between the forces under Derge's Jagö Namgyal Dorje and Chushigandru's Central Command. This conflict soon resulted in the Jagö Namgyal Dorje's forces setting up their own military base in Dakpo/Kongpo.

Jagö told Lotse that he should get most of the guns for his own force, because his regiment had assumed responsibility for bringing Gombo Tashi back from Shotalhosum. He said, "We, the three hundred riders from Derge, are going to bring back Gombo Tashi.[14] And [somewhat sarcastically] if we three hundred riders die in some place, then Chushigandru will be content."[15] That Namgyal Dorje was willing to say something so sarcastic at a meeting of the other leaders illustrates the open nature of the schism.

Lotse, however, disagreed, and told him that it was a bad idea to take so many cavalry to go after Gombo Tashi, since it will be hard to hide such a large force from the Chinese. It would be better, he suggested, to send just five or six messengers to Gombo Tashi. Namgyal Dorje and his commanders, however, insisted they were going to bring back Gombo Tashi as planned, and that they needed the new weapons to better accomplish that; and they threatened not to go if they didn't get them. Since everyone wanted to bring Gombo Tashi back to headquarters in Lhoka, ultimately Lotse allocated a larger portion of the arms to Namgyal Dorje,[16]

> I divided the weapons to all the different area groups in front of everybody. To the soldiers under Namgyal Dorje . . . I gave 45 Lee-Enfield .303 rifles and 4,650 bullets, as well as 8 Sten guns with 40 magazines, each holding 31 bullets. I also gave them 4,438 Pamali rifle bullets, plus 33 hand grenades, 4 English carbines and 4 tins of oil. Their leaders signed a receipt saying that they have borrowed the above-mentioned weapons and ammunitions and left the receipt in the Chushigandru office.[17]

---

[13] Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 43.

[14] Others like Radru Ngawang said that Namgyal Dorje had seven hundred fighters in his regiment.

[15] Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 44. In Tibetan: nga tsho sde dge ba rta pa 300 a 'brug mgon po bkris bsu bar 'gro gi yin// sa khul gcig la 300 shi tshar na chu bzhi sgang drug gi bsam pa rdzogs kyi red.

[16] Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 44–45.

[17] Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 45. I do not know what a Pamali rifle was.

The other units got much less, for example, the Targye Gomba unit that was guarding the Chongye area got only 5 Lee-Enfields and 500 bullets, plus 616 Pamali bullets.[18]

Soon after this, Lotse's partner Athar arrived from his debriefing in Calcutta and informed Chushigandru's leaders that the Americans had told him they were going to help them fight the Chinese.[19] This first drop, therefore, although small, provided a major boost for Chushigandru at a time when things were not going very well. They had succeeded in getting the weapons from Shang Ganden Chöngor, but because Gombo Tashi had been blocked from returning by the PLA, Chushigandru in Lhoka was entirely dependent on resupplying weapons and ammunition from dead PLA troops, and this clearly was inadequate going forward if they were to lauch major attacks, let alone if they were to expand in size by incorporating thousands of local Tibetans who had no weapons of their own.

In addition, as mentioned above, with Gombo Tashi gone, serious internal discord had started between Chushigandru's current acting heads and Jagö Namgyal Dorje, who felt that he was not subordinate to anyone but Gombo Tashi. Even more important was the fact that with Gombo Tashi not present, no comprehensive insurgency plan was developed. Some communication by messengers on horseback took place between Gombo Tashi and the main base in Lhoka, but the distances were great and there was no real coordination, in part because the CIA had decided not to supply the Khambas with modern, battery-operated, tactical portable radios, since this would have required frequent replacement of the batteries. Consequently, there was no detailed plan for all of Chushigandru that laid out the steps that should be taken to defeat the PLA in Tibet, and in what order these should be implemented. Ambushing occasional targets of opportunity was rewarding for the raiders, but without an overarching strategy of how to use the fighters to seriously hurt the Chinese in Tibet, it is difficult to see how they would be successful. A guerrilla insurgence had to not just kill a few Chinese here and there, but use their attacks to weaken the capability of the enemy. Nevertheless, the concrete display of support by America in mid October 1958, coupled with Athar's upbeat report about his meeting with the Americans in Calcutta, were welcome, and it was widely expected that this would be the first of many more larger arms drops of better weapons.

THE RETURN OF GYADOTSANG WANGDÜ FROM LITANG

Soon after Athar returned to Lhoka, he and Lotse received an unexpected visitor. Gyadotsang Wangdü, one of the four CIA trainees who had been parachuted back into Litang, suddenly appeared in Lhagyari. Wangdü was in terrible shape from his ordeal of escaping from Litang. His health was poor, his clothing tattered and the soles of his boots were worn out. Lotse said that when he and Athar saw him they couldn't stop themselves from bursting into tears. They took Wangdü to their residence and told him to stay with them, and then they got him a good meal and talked with him about their experiences and who the current Chushigandru leaders were. They also sent the CIA a message about his arrival.[20] However, at the same time that they sent that message, they received an unrelated message from Langley telling them to take several fighters and go at once back to Drigutang. They told Wangdü about these orders and said that they would return as soon as they received the new instructions from the Americans there. Lotse recalled what happened next,

---

[18] Blo Tshe (Lotse), 2001, 45.

[19] Ibid.

> I went to the Chushigandru office and made an internal report to Jangtsa Chöndze and the other leaders telling them that according to the wireless message we received the day before, we have to go to Drigutang, so we took ten fighters and departed that night. When we reached Drigu Langmothang, our wireless equipment had a problem so we couldn't receive or send messages, so I had to go to retrieve the backup wireless equipment that we had buried in a cave located near Tsöna [several days away]. [At Tsöna] we asked a villager for lodging, and after we arranged a place to sleep outside of the house, we pretended to go to sleep. When we thought that the other people had fallen asleep, we took a mule and went to the place where our things were buried and took out what we needed and then returned to the house and slept there. . . . The next day we left and went on to Tsöna Dzong.[21]

With the backup wireless set in hand, they contacted the CIA but got scolded. The CIA had been planning a second airdrop in November 1958, but because Lotse and Athar had taken too much time to communicate a response, the full moon window of opportunity had passed, so it had to be postponed. It did not occur until February 1959.[22]

---

[20] Blo Tshe (Lotse), 2001, 46.

[21] Ibid. Lotse commented that along the way, they met some Derge fighters who were bragging about Namgyal Dorje's importance in Chushigandru. Their comments further illustrate the extent of the internal conflicts that had arisen in Gombo Tashi's absence. Lotse said, "One of [the Derge fighters] told us things that made us laugh, 'Nowadays, the Chushigandru military headquarters is very good and recently, a plane came and dropped men and things. The person who made these relations was (Jagö) Namgyal Dorje. He first made relations with Taiwan and then with the United States. The plane came from Taiwan.' Then when we asked who is the leader of the Chushigandru nowadays? They said, "The leader is Jagö Namgyal Dorje."

[22] Blo Tshe (Lotse), 2001, 48. Conboy and Morrison (2002, 78) stated that a second airdrop occurred in November, and in a footnote, they disagree with Knaus, who wrote that the second drop took place only on 22 February 1959 (Knaus, 1999, 153). Knaus, of course, was correct; there were only two, not three, CIA airdrops before the Dalai Lama fled to exile, namely in October 1958 and February 1959. The confusion over the number of weapons drops apparently was an artifact of the planned November arms drop that never materialized.

Soon after that, Lotse and Athar received a message from the CIA regarding Gyadotsang Wangdü. He, as discussed previously, was the Litangba trainee who had refused to study communications, and now he again refused to do what the Americans instructed. The CIA wireless message regarding Wangdü said,

> You must give Wangdü a full set of wireless equipment and horses/mules and as much money as he needs and tell him *to return to Litang* to enquire about the whereabouts of his partners Tashi and Tsewang Dorje. . . . When I told him this, he replied "I don't want to go, and I also can't go. I want to go to India, so please report through the wireless that they should help me to get a permit so that I will be allowed to come to India." I reported this and the answer we received said, "You must tell Wangdü that he has to go and bring in the three other people [in his original group -Tsewang Dorje, Chöbulü and Tashi Tomden] back with him, no matter where they are now."[23]
>
> I discussed this with Athar and also showed the wireless message to Wangdü, but he continued to insist that, "I am definitely going to India." We stayed together for one night and then we decided that Wangdü and [a companion of ours] . . . will go to India. So Athar and I told him that when he goes to India, we will give him as much Tibetan and Indian currency as he needs for his expenses, and then we gave him advice, "You must report in detail to the teachers and leaders [the CIA officials in India] all of your information. Furthermore, you should not feel regret, *and should not argue about the issues that happened earlier [He was referring to the argument during training on Saipan over wireless training]* and you must earnestly talk about the work that should be done in the future so that we will not make mistakes in our work. This is very important.[24]

Soon after that, Wangdü left for India where, years later, he became one of the top leaders of Chushigandru after they established their new base in Mustang, in Nepal over the winter of 1960–61.

GOMBO TASHI GOES ON THE OFFENSE: THE POWO CAMPAIGN

Back in Shotalhosum, the remainder of the Chushigandru fighters led by Gombo Tashi settled in, and by the end of 1958, Gombo Tashi felt it was time to move south and ultimately reunite with the rest of Chushigandru in Lhoka. His first step was to attack and take control of the area called Powo (Tramo) that is located in Kongpo west of Markham and southeast of Pembar, and was a six-day horseback trip, all on rough trails. Gombo Tashi thought he could take Powo easily as there wasn't a single PLA soldier stationed between Pembar and there, and at Powo itself, there was only an Administration Office and a few troops. Moreover, the nearest major PLA base was about 550 km away in Chamdo.[25]

---

[23] These three, actually, had all been killed fighting the Chinese in Litang.

[24] Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 48.

Gombo Tashi was interested in Powo Tramo because of its strategic importance. It was near the Indian border (in what used to be called NEFA and today is called Arunachal Pradesh), so if he took this area, he would be in an excellent location to receive air or land shipments of weapons and supplies from India and he would also be well positioned to cut the Chamdo-Lhasa motor road. And, of course, if it came down to it, he could quickly flee to India.[26] He could also move part of his force west to Lhoka and restablish direct contact with the Lhoka main headquarters. Gombo Tashi attacked the Chinese there on 4 January 1959. Phu Dündül Chöying, the local dzong head at Pembar, explained what happened,

> If we could have taken it [Powo Tramog], unless a large number of PLA troops would have come, they would not have been able to handle us. [And from that location] there wasn't anything hindering us from fleeing to India [if we needed to]. So we attacked Powo Tramog with five hundred recruits [farmers from Shotalhosum] who had five hundred horses, *but no guns,* and about two hundred [of Gombo Tashi's] fighters. . . . [However,] the Chinese and Tibetan cadres at Powo had made preparations. They had dug underground tunnels and were staying in the tunnels. The Chushigandru fighters thought that there were a large number of people in the tunnels and didn't dare to go down into them, so the situation remained stalemated for about five or six days.[27]
>
> In the meantime, the besieged Chinese had wireless equipment, so they had sent a message to Chamdo requesting troops to help. . . . Before Chushigandru was able to figure out how to handle the tunnels, they were confronted with the reinforcements coming from Chamdo, and they fled back to Pembar. . . . The PLA pursued them up to the bottom of a mountain pass called Dangla, which was four days' journey from Powo Tramog . . . but probably had some kind of problems or new orders, because they stopped there and turned back.[28]

It is not known how many casualties overall Gombo Tashi suffered in the attack, but one of the attack group's platoon leaders, Jama Ngagdrug (from Targye Gomba), said that "Of the twenty-two fighters I sent to Powo Tramog, ten soldiers came back, one of whom was wounded. Twelve [55 percent], therefore, had disappeared; they were killed or had gotten separated.[29]

---

[25] Phu Dündül Chöying, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0005.01.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Deng (1985, 41) said that there were two hundred fighters from Gombo Tashi along with over one thousand rebels from Pembar and Lhorong who attacked the Powo County Committee [Ch. zhongxin xianwei] headquarters for more than ten days.

[28] Phu Dündül Chöying, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0005.01.

[29] Jama Ngagdrug, interview, India, 2003, H.0229.02.

Chinese sources give a parallel account, although their numbers are exaggerated:

> Over 1,600 armed rebels led by Andru Gombo Tashi and Jitao attacked the Tramo county branch of the Work Committee before dawn on the 4th of January. On our side, 1 company and 60 local militia men adopted defensive positions and made 3 counter attacks. After 10 days and nights of engagements with the enemy, when they heard that our reinforcements had reached the county from Lhasa and Chamdo, they escaped toward the border on the morning of the 14th.[30]

Gombo Tashi, therefore, spent the 1959 New Year's holiday still in Shotalhosum [New Year's Day was 8 February]. At this time, he decided he should return directly to Lhoka, so he called a meeting and said to the locals, "You people stay here and defend your own territory. We are going to go to Lhoka. After we get there, guns will be dropped from abroad and we will send these back to you, so you need to send people [with us] to carry these guns back." Phu Dündül Chöying explained how this did not work out, saying, "I sent two hundred riders from the four dzongs in my area to bring back the guns. . . . However, when Gombo Tashi had only reached Lharigo, which was about fourteen days northeast of Lhasa, he learned that the revolt had broken out in Lhasa, so he and his men left for Lhoka and then immediately went to India."[31] The local recruits returned to their homes in Shotalhosum with no guns.

Gombo Tashi and his original expeditionary force, therefore, were never able to rejoin the main base, reaching Lhoka only after the Dalai Lama had already passed to India.

Meanwhile, Radru Ngawang, one of the top Chushigandru commanders, who had gotten separated from Gombo Tashi, gradually made his way back to Lhasa and Lhoka, carrying out a famous ambush along the way.

THE RETURN OF RADRU NGAWANG

As a result of the ambush of Gombo Tashi at Mashung (south of Drigung), many Chushigandru fighters got separated from the main group and had to fend for themselves. Radru Ngawang was one of these. As discussed in chapter 6, he led a small group of fighters to take control of a critical pass that prevented the PLA from closing its encirclement of Gombo Tashi, and thus allowed Gombo Tashi and his main force to escape. He, however, had been wounded and knocked unconscious, and ended up being left for dead by Gombo Tashi.

However, he was not dead, and when he awakened, he found that he and his partner Shalotsang Chöndze were alone in that mountain pass area where no one lived. They had no idea where the rest of Chushigandru had gone, and couldn't go down from the high area because the lower parts of the mountain were filled with PLA troops. So they stayed for six days and nights alone at the higher elevations without food, until they finally ran into a nomad from Drigung's Yangri Monastery who gave them some of his butter, dried cheese, and tsamba, and then helped them to get to the monastery.

---

[30] Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 4 January 1959, 82. Gombo Tashi fled back to Shotalhosum, not India.

[31] Phu Dündül Chöying, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0005.01.

The monastery's head lama, Drigung Kyamgön Rinpoche, was then in residence, so they asked him to do a divination about whether Gombo Tashi's life was in danger. The divination indicated that his life was in great danger, and the Rinpoche instructed Radru Ngawang to do various rituals, for example, sparing the lives of many animals by buying ones that were scheduled to be slaughtered and setting them free. Radru Ngawang and his partner, however, were not sure what they should do, so they commissioned another divination (with another lama), this time asking where they should go. Radru explained,

> We also didn't know where to go . . . so we handed the Lama three pebbles; one white, one black, and one yellow, and told him to do a divination to determine which of the pebbles would be better. The white one meant going to wherever Andru Jinda was staying. The black one meant going to the north again. The yellow one was to go to Phembo [just north of Lhasa and then to Lhoka]. . . . The yellow pebble was selected, so we decided to go to Phembo.[32]

In Phembo, they ran into some other Chushigandru fighters who, like themselves, had gotten separated from Gombo Tashi, and they all agreed to stay together and create a "new" regiment to fight the Chinese. However, Radru Ngawang first went to Lhasa, because, as he said, "I thought it would be useless for us to just stay in Phembo. We had to find out about the situation in Lhasa and the whereabouts of Gombo Tashi, and we needed to send messengers to the main regiment in Lhoka."[33] So he and Shalotsang left the other fighters in Phembo, and set off to Lhasa via Sera Monastery, where they had friends who were monks. As a precaution against discovery by the Chinese in Lhasa, they left their horses, rifles, and Khamba-style chupas at the monastery and changed into monk's robes before they continued to Ramoche in Lhasa, where Shalotsang's wife and family lived. No one recognized them, and they reached there safely.

Once in Lhasa, Radru Ngawang sent messengers to Lhoka asking the home base to try to get in touch with Gombo Tashi. At the same time, he also contacted his two Trapchi Regiment army friends Kedram and Wangden Tashi. These two had been the main army officers attending Chushigandru meetings in Lhasa before Gombo Tashi left for Lhoka, and they also were working closely with Phala and his clique.

---

[32] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.06. Phembo is just over a pass north of Lhasa.

[33] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.03.

Radru Ngawang and Shalotsang told them the whole story of their battles and they decided it would be useful for the Lhasa people to know of this, so they made a wall poster telling about this and stuck up copies around Lhasa. Radru Ngawang and Shalotsang narrated the events and Kedram took dictation and wrote the text for the posters, although for security, they had monks make copies so that the handwriting was unidentifiable.[34]

One of Radru Ngawang's main reasons for going to Lhasa was to solicit arms and ammunition for his regiment in Phembo, so he asked Kedram and Wangden to raise this issue on their behalf with Phala. Radru Ngawang explained the response,

> I said that there is no use for us to go after [find] Andru Jinda, and that it would be better to regroup the scattered fighters in the Phembo area. But I said that internally you must help us get arms. We requested 100 303-English [Lee-Enfield] carbines, 8 Bren guns, 1 large cannon and 6 smaller ones [probably mortars], and 20–30 Sten guns [from the government's arsenal in the Potala Palace]. Altogether (we asked them for) about 200–300 weapons. . . . When they told this to Phala, he said we should tell this to the Bodyguard Regiment's Commander [Taklha] and to Tashi Bera [one of the commanders of the Trapchi Regiment]. These two asked us (through Kedram and Wangden Tashi), "If we give you the guns, how are you going to take [transport] them?" . . . They said that the Chinese are very strict . . . so you can't [openly] take the arms from the armory. We told them that you need to arrange a fake theft. If you can do that, we explained that we had many trusted [Khamba] monks in the Bombora Khamtsen in Sera and Drepung [and these will secretly carry out the weapons]. They said our plan was good, but it will take some days to assemble the weapons.[35]

They also discussed what had been going on in Lhasa since the Khambas' move to Lhoka, telling Radru that the situation in Lhasa was deteriorating despite the fact that the Kashag was still administering things internally as usual. The Chinese were showing less respect for traditional Tibetan customs when they interacted with the Dalai Lama, and they were building more bunkers and fortifying their buildings. They feared the Chinese were going to take the Dalai Lama away.

However, the discussions between the army officers and the Radru Ngawang went far beyond just complaining about the behavior of the Chinese. The issue of the Dalai Lama's safety came up. Radru Ngawang explained,

> So they were telling me all about this and that, and how it has become very dangerous in Lhasa, and then they asked us what we [Khambas] could do [from the outside] and what they could do from the inside about the worsening situation. . . . He [Kedram also] said it will be difficult for the Dalai Lama to stay in Lhasa [for long], so what do you think about this? What kind of plans do you have?

---

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

Radru said he replied,

> "If this is the case, it is not okay at all for the Dalai Lama to fall into the hands of the Chinese, so please secretly hand him over to me and I will take him out of Lhasa." Since this was not going to be okay, they might have been laughing [at his naïve suggestion]. . . . At that time, our way of thinking was very simplistic. We said that for the All Knowing Dalai Lama we will sacrifice everything. He is our sun, our precious Jewel, so we must make sure he does not fall into Chinese hands. Since this is the case, have faith in us and let us take the Dalai Lama with us (laughs). We only had thirteen or fourteen soldiers [fighters], but we said leave the Dalai Lama in our hands. This was very simplistic thinking. It is not that easy, right? They replied that this is not possible. . . .[36]

Radru Ngawang, however, like Gombo Tashi earlier, not only did not receive the weapons he wanted from the Potala's armory but suddenly, out of the blue, was told that he had to leave Lhasa immediately. Kedram and Wangden Tashi came to see him one day and told him that the situation in Lhasa has become especially tense, so you two have to leave Lhasa at once. They would not elaborate the reason for this, but tried to lessen the impact by bringing some gifts, which they said came from the Dalai Lama himself, for example, khata scarves, two Jigjey Mahe protective amulets and some bread, meat, plus six hundred rounds of Sten gun ammunition and one thousand rounds of Lee-Enfield rifle bullets.

The two army officers told Radru that the instructions to leave Lhasa had come personally from Lord Chamberlain Phala, and that *the only thing we should think about now is to ensure the Dalai Lama's safety,* so for this, Chushigandru should work carefully outside [of Lhasa], while they will work carefully inside.[37] In other words, Chushigandru should work carefully to ensure that Lhoka was safe as an exit pathway for the Dalai Lama, while they will worked inside Lhasa to make sure that the Dalai Lama was safe and that when the time came, they would be ready and able to exfiltrate the Dalai Lama to Lhoka. Consequently, in late November 1958, Phala and his resistance clique were already focused on getting the Dalai Lama out of Lhasa when the time was right.

Radru Ngawang was so shocked by this sudden turnabout, that he actually doubted the veracity of these instructions, so asked Gen Chödrak, a well-known Litangpa who lived in Lhasa, to go to talk with Tsendrön Kelsang Yeshi, a very close associate of Phala. Chödrak reported back that the order to leave at once was genuine and that you two have to leave immediately. But he didn't say why.

---

[36] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.03. Kedram (interview, India, 1995, H.0041.04.) did not remember this conversation, but as will be seen, Radru Ngawang's account of the role this played in internal Chushigandru politics is convincing, especially since we know from other sources that getting the Dalai Lama out of Lhasa was on the minds of Phala and those around him.

[37] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2003, H.0012.08.

Resigned now to leaving, the four of them—Kedram, Wangden Tashi, Radru Ngawang, and Shalotsang—took an oath front of a picture of the Dalai Lama, pledging that Kedram and Wangden would work internally and Radru and Shalotsang would work externally. The next evening, Radru and Shalotsang returned to Phembo.[38]

Radru Ngawang ultimately learned what had transpired, but only after the 1959 revolt when he met Kedram and Phala in Lhoka while they were all fleeing to India. Radru Ngawang explained,

> Later we found out that at a Kashag meeting, the main Chinese general said that they have captured Andru Gombo Tashi, and asked if they had any suggestions about what form of punishment he should be given. Drönyerchemmo [Phala] said that his hair was standing up and he saw the image of Andru as if he was watching a movie. Kelsang Yeshe said,[39] "You have captured the leader of the reactionaries, so we can give him Tibetan and Chinese punishments. But first, you should not punish him, but should hand him to the Dalai Lama's government. A letter should be sent to all the reactionaries saying that Andru has been arrested and when all [rebels] have surrendered, then we can give whatever punishments [are appropriate]." Actually, the Chinese told such a big lie. . . . For five or six days, everyone held their breath wondering when Gombo Tashi would be brought to the Barkor Street. However, after about two weeks passed, a messenger from Shotalhosum arrived with a letter for Phala from Gombo Tashi that had been concealed in a snuff container made out of a horn. The letter said that he was well and described the fighting down there. Thus, the Chinese lie was revealed. . . . But this was the reason I had to leave. Drönyerchemmo Phala told me this himself when he came to Lhoka.[40]

After Radru Ngawang returned to Phembo, he worked at organizing his regiment and was able to bring together about sixty-two fighters who had gotten separated from Gombo Tashi. For about three weeks, they discussed what their next move should be, but then, once again, the situation changed dramatically, when on the day of the Ganden Ngamchö Festival [the twenty-fifth of the tenth month, or 6 December 1958], they received a letter from Lhasa sent by Radru's elder brother Sonam Phüntso and his two army friends (Kedram and Wangden Tashi). It told Radru that he had to return to Lhoka at once, because the Chinese were in the midst of undertaking a major strengthening of their position at Tsetang in Lhoka. Radru Ngawang explained,

---

[38] This was on about the thirteenth or fourteenth of the tenth lunar month (24–25 November 1958).

[39] Kelsang Yeshi was not in the Kashag, so he must have been repeating what one of the kalöns said.

[40] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.03. Phala had feared that if there were Chushigandru fighters like Radru Ngawang in Lhasa, they would take some militant action to free Gombo Tashi, and this could lead to an outbreak of serious warfare in Lhasa and threaten the security of the Dalai Lama.

> The letter said that the PLA was sending troops and military supplies to Lhoka [Tsetang]. It reported that 105 trucks had already gone with arms and ammunition to Lhoka and returned, and that another large convoy was about to leave . . . so it is imperative that you return to Lhoka and join the main base. The letter said that the three of them had consulted the protector deity Shungden about this, and he had prophesied that you should go immediately to Lhoka via Chushul.[41]

Kedram also recalled sending a message to Radru Ngawang telling him that on orders from Tashi Bera, the commander of the Trapchi Regiment, in conjunction with Chemmo (Phala), he should attack this truck convoy in Lhoka.

> [Kedram said:] Most importantly, we said that they must go soon and destroy the trucks. This they did exactly.
>
> Q. And did that idea definitely come from Chemmo?
>
> A. Yes, via Chemmo, for all practical purposes, but he did not come out openly. From the time Chushigandru started it was not possible [to proceed] without the connection with Chemmo. Like a wheel, Chemmo kept it turning. . . .
>
> Q. One thing (Radru) Ngawang said [to me] was that he was in Phembo when it was said that a lot of trucks were going from Lhoka to Lhasa and then returning loaded with arms. Did you send a letter to Phembo [about this]?
>
> A. Yes, a letter was sent saying that "You need to go immediately." That at such a time, the trucks seemed to be going and they should be destroyed.
>
> Q. So who did you contact? Phala?
>
> A. It was coming via Tashi Berala, who in turn, contacted Phala. So that's how it looked.
>
> Q. Then Tashi Berala told you, and you sent the message.
>
> A Yes.[42]

Ambushing a large Chinese convoy was a major undertaking, since it would be protected by PLA troops, so Radru did not make a final decision until he asked for a prophecy from the protector deity Phembo Tsöra Chemmo. That deity responded saying that whether he leaves or stays in Phembo, he should do it before the fifth of the eleventh month [15 December]. That was only a few days from then, so Radru got his fighters ready quickly and they left, traveling at night. They got to Chushul exactly on the fifth (15 December). Radru said, "There was not a single Chinese present there, so we were able to get the ferry and cross the [Yarlungtsangpo] river easily on the sixteenth. On the other side of the river, there was an estate owned by Drepung Monastery where meat and grain had been stored to be used by Chushigandru patrols, so we went there to stay that evening."[43]

---

41. Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.03.
42. Kedram (Kesang Dramdrü), interview, India, 1995, H.0041.04.
43. Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.03.

THE GONGGAR AMBUSH

Radru Ngawang and his fighters ate and rested at the monastery, but also posted lookouts to see if the Chinese convoy was coming. One of these lookouts noticed a lot of dust being kicked up far away across the river toward Chushul, so they assumed this must be the 105-truck Chinese convoy on the move to the river ferry site, escorted by PLA troops.[44] Radru's fighters held a meeting about this, and while some wanted to open fire on the Chinese as they crossed the river, Radru Ngawang convinced them to wait, arguing that just opening fire would be a waste of ammunition, since they would only be killing a few Chinese. He told them that this would make us feel good, but it wouldn't enable us to capture more arms and ammunition. Instead, he said we should wait and find a good ambush site where we could kill the Chinese and also collect their arms. This argument carried the day, so the next morning at dawn, Radru Ngawang and his 62 fighters left to set up his famous 18–19 December ambush at Gonggar Dzong in which 93 PLA troops were killed, 35 wounded, and 9 trucks destroyed.[45] Radru Ngawang recalled the ambush,

> When we reached Gonggar, we got in touch with the local populace, the monks and the dzongpön. . . . We asked the dzongpön to arrange a guard patrol and we also told him not to send any of the donkey herders from Gonggar to Lhasa [to ensure the Khambas' presence there would not be leaked] . . . and if the trucks come at night, you will see their headlights and must let us know this. We are going to go to the dzong to get some sleep. . . . They agreed.
>
> We also asked them where the [main base of] Chushigandru was. The dzongpön didn't know, but he thought people had said they were at Thowa, Drigu, and at Lhagyari Dzongs. So we sent about six messengers and told them to travel day and night [to make contact]. To ensure they didn't stop and go to sleep, we sealed the letters in their dress sashes so that they wouldn't be able to unsash their dress and go to sleep. These letters said that Radru Ngawang is at Gonggar Dzong and is going to fight the Chinese.
>
> The next morning, at dawn, the local populace started shouting that the Chinese are coming. My brother Sonam Tsering was there, so I told him to check this out with his binoculars. He looked and told me I had better hurry because 30–40 trucks were approaching fast. When I looked, I saw that 37 trucks were coming together. We had all of the road covered, and I had told our fighters where to wait and what to do. We had 62 fighters. . . . However, when the trucks reached the place where we were waiting in ambush, the lead truck shouted a signal and then all the trucks stopped and people got out. There was a path leading up the mountain from the main road, and a Chinese soldier started coming up that way [on foot]. I saw him from where I was waiting behind a pile of thorn bushes. I told the men to stay where they were, and

---

[44] Deng 1985, 41. They were accompanied by the third battalion of the 155th regiment.

[45] Gonggar is the location of the current Lhasa airport.

> I said I'll be ready with my Sten gun. However, just then he [the Chinese guy] shouted something, turned around and went back. He was very close to me and I could have killed him, but I was more interested in having the Chinese convoy move into our ambush site. I was praying to our protector deity for that to happen. The Chinese man, who was initially suspicious, then returned to the trucks . . . and immediately they started moving again. They drove straight into the . . . first and second ambush sites. We could hear the shooting. Then two trucks that had passed beyond and a third came . . . to where [some of our fighters were]. They opened fire, so we also started firing. . . . Twenty-nine trucks came into our ambush site and for about an hour the Chinese could not fire back. Then some started getting out of their trucks and were shooting from under their vehicles. . . . We [won and] got all the guns and ammunition from two trucks—over 100 rifles and 8 Bren guns.[46]

This was the Khambas' first major offensive success in Lhoka, and it stunned the Chinese, as the following Chinese sources show. The first brief description comes from the Party's chronology that lists important events in Tibet.

> December 18:
>
> Rebels attacked our convoy at Gonggar in Lhoka. Commander Du Xiaome of the third battalion of the 155th regiment was leading one company to protect the cadres of the Lhoka branch (of the Tibet Work Committee) and bring provisions to the Tsetang branch military unit.
>
> On the 18th, when they reached Gonggar, the rebels who were hiding in a roadside monastery and a village attacked us and killed 37 of our cadres and soldiers, including the battalion commander, and the vice director of the Work Committee branch office. Twenty-two of our people were injured and 7 trucks were destroyed. We killed 6 of the rebels.
>
> On the 19th, the deputy commander of the 155th regiment, Yin Chunhe, led two companies from Tsetang [to go west to assist at the Gonggar ambush site]. When they reached Dranang, 200 rebels were hiding in ambush and they killed 56 of our cadres and soldiers, including the deputy regiment commander Yin Chunhe. They also wounded 13 of our people and destroyed 2 of our trucks. We killed and injured a total of 20 rebels.[47]

A more elaborate Chinese account by Ji Youquan, described the ambush in more detail.

> On Dec. 16, the armed rebels learned that a PLA truck convoy was going from Lhasa to Tsetang this month, so they set up an ambush with over 700 rebels at Gonggar.[48]

---

46. Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.03 and H.0012.04.

47. Zhonggong xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 18 December 1958, 81–82.

48. It may have seemed like seven hundred, but we know from Radru Ngawang (see above) that there were only sixty-two fighters in his unit.

On Dec. 16, the 155th regiment gave the order to Du Xiaome, commander of the third battalion, to lead the first and third companies from Lhasa to Tsetang. Their task was to guard the cadres of the TWC branch office in Lhoka and take 27 PLA trucks to transport military supplies for the troops in Tsetang. The Military Headquarters ordered the troops that were stationed at Tsetang to go toward the west to meet up with the truck convoy.

On that same day, Du Xiaome and the two companies went with the truck convoy to Chushul as guards. On Dec. 18, the 155th regiment ordered Du to leave the first company at Chushul to defend the ferry, and to lead the third company to guard the truck convoy as it moved [east] toward Tsetang.

The Intelligence Dept. of the Tibet [PLA] Military Headquarters had learned that the armed rebels were planning a military action between Gonggar and Tsetang, so they notified the 155th regiment. Qiao Xueting, the political commissar of the 155th regiment, passed this information to Du Xiaome and asked him to be extra careful. Du laughed, saying that headquarters was being too careful over trivial things. He said to Qiao, "A few rebels can frighten some people like that, but if there is an order to fight them, I, Du Xiaome, can lead just one company and flatten Tibet."

Qiao knew that Du was a truly brave guy on the battlefield and was a capable commander and a very experienced soldier, but Qiao still reminded him, "It is true that the rebels are quite vulnerable, but you are in the open and they are in the dark. It is better to be careful." Du felt it was not nice to argue with the political commissar so he said confidently, "Political commissar, don't worry. If I can't finish this task I will not come back." Du left.

When they were leaving from Chushul, the commander of the first company said to Du, "I heard there are a lot of rebels in the area between Gonggar and Tsetang, so let's be careful and proceed cautiously." Du said, "Don't worry, those bastards can't get me."

Not long after they crossed the Yalungtsangpo River, they met a few local Tibetans, so Du asked them if they had seen any rebels. They said, "Yes." Du heard that, but he still did not send an advance team. [Instead] he told the leader of the truck convoy that he would lead the way, and he got into the very first truck at the head of the convoy. After entering Gonggar, when they were only a few kilometers from the mountaintop beside the Yalungtsangpo River, the commander of the third company suggested that Du send out an advance team. He was afraid there could an ambush ahead. Du thought for a while and agreed, saying, "OK, send out a squad with a machine gun."

The advance squad walked ahead, and the whole truck convoy followed them slowly. The rebels saw the advance team, but did not do anything. When the advance squad was only a few dozen meters away, the rebels were still waiting. They were hiding well, so the squad did not see them.

When Du saw that the advance squad had reached the foot of the mountain with nothing happening, he thought there were no rebels there and shouted to the squad, "Hurry up, hurry up. Get back into the trucks. There are no damned rebels here at all. If we delay more, we won't be able to get to Tsetang tomorrow. All of you have the courage of women and mice. You hear some wind and you think the rain is coming." After the advance squad came back, Du ordered the drivers to speed up.

When the truck convoy was inside the ambush circle, the rebels still waited, but when Du's first truck got close to the foot of the mountain, the heavy machine guns on the mountaintop started to roar. The driver was killed on the spot and the truck, without a driver, rolled into Yalungtsangbo River. Du Xiaome and the others inside the truck were all killed.

The truck convoy then stopped completely, while the rebels focused all their firepower on the trucks. The commander of the third company organized a counterattack at once, but the firepower of the rebels was too strong, and the rebels started to move forward to approach the truck convoy. Shen Fenglou, the vice director of the TWC Branch Office in Lhoka, assisted the company commander to organize the fighting power of TWC cadres, drivers, and soldiers. They hit the rebels and forced them back once, but a second attack started soon, in which Shen was killed by a bullet. The third company suffered over a dozen casualties. The leaders kept telling the soldiers to fight bravely. Their slogan was to protect the military supplies on the trucks and to fight until the reinforcement troops came.

The rebels tried to finish the battle as soon as possible, so were intensifying their fire more and more. Their bullets hit the gas tanks of seven trucks, which caught fire so the whole group of trucks was in danger of going up in flames. It was impossible to put out the fire, so seven trucks were destroyed.

After they hit back at the rebels, the company commander ordered some soldiers to watch the rebels, while others pushed the burning trucks away from the other trucks. The rebels fired at the soldiers who were pushing the trucks, killing seven of them and wounding twelve. When the rebels launched another attack, the officers ordered everyone, including the wounded, to join the counterattack. They fought from 11 A.M. till 1 P.M. Then the rebels temporarily withdrew, but came back again after an hour. They aimed at the gas tanks and hit six more trucks, but these trucks did not catch fire and burn. The fighting resumed from evening until early morning of the next day.

Before dawn, the rebels were afraid that the PLA reinforcement troops would arrive [soon], so they withdrew. When the three companies sent from Lhasa by Qiao Xueting arrived at that place, the battle was long over and the PLA had suffered thirty-seven deaths, including a PLA battalion commander, and a vice director of the TWC branch office in Lhoka. Twenty-two were also wounded. The PLA killed only six rebels. It was a heavy loss for the PLA.

After Du Xiaome's troops were ambushed, the troops that came [west] from Tsetang] to reinforce Du's troops also got ambushed. After Du and the truck convoy left Lhasa, the Party Committee of the 155th regiment was afraid that Du's convoy would be ambushed, so according to instructions from the Tibet Military Headquarters, on December 16th they sent Yin Chunhe, a vice commander of the 155th regiment, to lead two platoons [from Tsetang] to start [west] along the road to Gonggar. The idea was to reinforce Du in case his team got ambushed. Yin, however, did not make good preparations for the task and his team ran out of supplies when they reached Jedeshöl, so the two platoons had to return to Tsetang on December 18. Then at 11 P.M., when Yin had just got back to the military camp, the telephone rang and the Tibetan military headquarters told him that Du's team had been ambushed at Gonggar and ordered the 155th regiment to reinforce Du's troops right away.

Besides sending three companies to support Du [from Lhasa], Qiao Xueting also ordered Yin [again] to take two companies to support Du. Yin got the seventh and eighth companies ready that night and drove toward Gonggar in four trucks at 7 A.M. on December 19th.

However, after the rebels ambushed Du at Gongkar, Jiang Huating [the Chinese army defector fighting with Chushigandru] was sure that the PLA would send reinforcement troops. He thought that it was impossible to send troops from Lhasa [in time], and there was only one company at Chushul, so it was most likely that they would send troops from Tsetang. So the rebels decided to ambush the PLA reinforcement troops at Dranang, [which was] between Gonggar and Tsetang.

Yin Chunhe set out at noon on December 19, to try to get to Du's battlefield as soon as possible. His rode in a truck from the eighth company at the very front, and when the other three trucks saw their commander go to the front, they followed him very closely. At 2:30 P.M., when Yin's team entered the ambush circle, the rebels started shooting at once from all sides. Two drivers died instantly, and their trucks slid into the ditch at the side of the road. The other two trucks stopped too. All the soldiers got off the trucks and started to fire back.

Yin thought the rebels were [just] trying to block their way to support Du at Gonggar so he tried hard to break away from the rebels so he could go on to support Du. He did not know that the battle at Gonggar was long over.

Yin and his soldiers tried to break free and continue to move west, but the rebels tried hard to block them, and were firing at them from both sides, right and left. Yin tried to lead troops to break out of the ambush encirclement twice, but failed both times and suffered losses. When Yin was organizing the third attempt to break out, a bullet hit his head and he died instantly. After Yin's death, there was temporary confusion among his soldiers. The rebels launched another attack and hit two gas tanks. The trucks started to burn. The commanders of the seventh and eighth companies saw that the rebels were firing at them from all sides, and understood they had been ambushed, so they ordered the soldiers to fight back while waiting for reinforcement troops to arrive.

The rebels tried to wipe out the two companies before any other PLA troops arrived, so they launched one big attack after another. When the rebels broke through the PLA's defense line at the southwest side of the battlefield, they rushed toward the PLA like a flood. The PLA and the rebels fought hand to hand. Over 20 PLA soldiers died. The two company commanders led more soldiers to reinforce the PLA defense line there immediately, but the rebels took away the machine guns of the PLA troops who had been previously defending the southwest side of the battlefield, and withdrew. Two PLA companies took that opportunity to occupy a hilltop in the north, but then the rebels immediately launched an attack at the hilltop. The seventh company commander said to the commander of the eighth company: "We have to break

> out or we will all die." They thought they were too far away from Tsetang, so they had to move toward Gonggar. Since they knew Qiao Xieting had sent three companies to Gonggar, it was to their advantage to move toward that direction [west]. They organized their troops to try to break the encirclement. It was dusk when they occupied another hilltop in the west. Then, when they got ready to attempt another breakout toward the west, the rebels suddenly withdrew.
>
> The [PLA] company commanders thought it was quite strange, and they organized the troops to chase the rebels. The rebels all rode horses, and the PLA ran with their legs, so before long, the rebels disappeared. The two companies returned to the battlefield to count their losses. In this ambush, including Yin Chunhe, the two PLA companies suffered 56 dead and 13 wounded. Their casualties were almost half of their total troops. The rebels grabbed 4 light machine guns, 2 heavy machine guns, and 35 rifles and pistols from them. Two trucks were burned, and only 20 rebels were killed.
>
> In the two ambushes between Tsetang and Gonggar, the PLA suffered heavy losses—over one hundred casualties. This shocked not only the Tibet Military Headquarters [in Lhasa], but also the Central Military Committee [in Beijing]. The PLA had not suffered such a big loss since the Battle of Chamdo during the liberation of Tibet [in 1950]. . . . From September 17th, when the PLA convoy was first ambushed [in Wuyok], to October 22nd, when the PLA troops [in Tsetang, see below] were attacked, and now until December 18th and 19th when the PLA troops were ambushed in Gonggar, the PLA had suffered bigger and bigger losses.
>
> The Central Military Committee took this very seriously, and Luo Ruiqing, the Minister of Public Security, thought immediate measures were needed for this situation. So he called Wang Kang, the Chief of Staff of the Tibet Military Headquarters who was then taking a vacation in Beijing, to his office on December 21st and told him, "Chief of Staff Wang, I can't let you enjoy your life anymore." Wang Kang asked: "Minister, do we have new military action?" Luo asked him, "Did you hear what's happening in Tibet?" Wang said: "Yes." Luo told him, "The Central Military Committee has decided that you must stop your vacation and return to Tibet immediately." Wang replied, "Let me get ready and I will leave in the morning the day after tomorrow." "No," Luo said, "You leave now, an airplane is ready for you." Wang Kang said: "Let me make a phone call to my family." Luo said, "Just get onto the plane. I will inform your family."
>
> Wang Kang flew to Chengdu the same day, and went to Lhasa by truck from there. Wang's return improved the command capacity of Tibet Military Headquarters, but he could not change the general situation. *The armed rebel forces kept expanding, and a full-scale rebellion in Tibet was right at the doorstep.*[49]

The scale of such an impressive and well-organized victory so close to Lhasa showed once again the deadly skill of Chushigandru at conducting ambushes on the highway and heightened the worries of the Chinese in Lhasa that the Khambas might soon try to attack them in the city, so they intensified their already intense preparations to defend against such an attack.

---

[49] Ji Youquan 1993b, 64–69 (emphasis added).

After this impressive victory, Radru Ngawang and his men continued along the southern side of the Yarlungtsangpo River, where they learned that there was a unit of about one hundred Chushigandru fighters staying at Chongye Riudechen, so they went there and met up with them.

CHUSHIGANDRU'S PROBLEMS IN LHOKA

As a result of his conversations in Lhasa, Radru Nawang believed it was essential that Chushigandru keep Lhoka free of the PLA. On the one hand, this gave them a home area where they could continue to move freely and a large area where weapons could be safely air-dropped, but more inmportantly, this was critical should the Dalai Lama have to flee quickly from Lhasa. To accomplish this, Radru Ngawang was expecting to make a tactical plan that would include all the Chushigandru fighters south of the Yarlungtsangpo River, because all would be needed. However, Radru Ngawang quickly learned that this would be extremely difficult to achieve, because the current Chushigandru Headquarters was very different than it had been when Gombo Tashi left for Shang Ganden Chöngor in August 1958. His realization of this change began as soon as he arrived in Chongye Riudechen, where there was a Chushigandru regiment stationed. He recalled being shocked and dismayed to see firsthand the lack of discipline the fighters there were showing toward the local Tibetans, and even more, by the serious internal strife within Chushigandru. Radru said that when he learned of this, "At that moment, I felt very sad."[50]

Radru Ngawang had initially warned Gombo Tashi that disciplinary problems might emerge at headquarters if Gombo Tashi was not there in person, and had urged him to stay in Drigutang and let him and some other commanders go to get the weapons at Shang Ganden Chöngor. Chushigandru was not a trained army with a strong culture of hierarchical command, and given his fellow Khambas' lack of respect for authorities outside of their own native areas, he feared that only Gombo Tashi had the stature necessary to maintain order and discipline. Gombo Tashi, however, was stubborn and didn't agree, insisting that he had to lead the expedition in person. Now Radru Ngawang saw that his worse fears had come to pass.

Radru Ngawang learned of the abuses being committed toward local Tibetans firsthand when he passed through a small area near Chongye Riudechen called Narag. There the local leaders and peasants complained bitterly about the abuses and high-handed behavior of the Khambas stationed at Chongye. He recalled,

---

[50] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2002, H.0012.07.

> The regiment under Kunga Samden had stayed in a place called Narag in Chongye area for a couple of days. Saying that a household called Naragtsang were Chinese spies, they took all the grain and things from that household, like they were robbing them of these. And the women had to run away to the mountains.
>
> Q. Did the fighters under Kunga Samden cause the women to run away?
>
> A. That was caused by the fighters under the three commanders [who were in charge in Chongye].
>
> Q. Did you heard about that in Chongye?
>
> A. When I came through Narag, the populace showed me the situation and they told me that they were doing things like that.
>
> Q. What did they show you?
>
> A. They showed me the livestock feeding troughs that had been full with grain, though the horses could not eat so much. And the monks [who were fighters] in Chushigandru, wanted the populace to bring young monks [Tib. tratru, for homosexual activity]. The miser were reporting those things to me. Our [Chushigandru's] twenty-seven-point military regulations [Tib. magtrim] were very strict, so how could those things be allowed to happen? . . .
>
> [So when I met with the leaders at Chongye] I told them, "The Army to Defend Religion" is supposed to defend Buddhism, so we have to abide by our twenty-seven-point military regulations. But this place has done things like this [in Narag], so I am going to take my own sixty or so fighters and go to fight the Chinese [on his own somewhere else]. I am not going to stay here.[51]

He also said,

> So we met [in Chongye] and at the meeting I cried. I said that I never thought about myself for one single day and was always worrying how Andru Jinda's (Gombo Tashi's) main base was faring. Now when I get here, the situation is like this, and I don't know if it is due to Chushigandru or the false Khambas, but the people are now running away instead of helping. So I said that I will not stay in such a situation and I'm leaving. I'll take my fighters and fight and die someplace else. So they said don't do this, and we met for two days.[52]

All of them then agreed with Radru Ngawang about the need to adhere to the twenty-seven-point rules of discipline, as well as his tactical plan to distribute all of fighters throughout the south to guard the different Yarlungtsangpo River crossing areas. However, when they started discussing reallocating troops to do this while also attacking Chinese convoys, Radru Ngawang learned that a very serious internal split had occurred that would probably prevent that, namely the previously mentioned dispute between Jagö Namgyal Dorje's Regiment and the main headquarters in Lhagyari. They told him emphatically that he had to go at once to the main headquarters at Lhagyari and discuss in detail what had happened and what could be done to remedy this situation.

---

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

Radru agreed, and he arrived at Lhagyari on approximately 25 December 1958 [in the middle of the eleventh Tibetan month]. There he found only a few hundred fighters, together with the headquarters' "civil" leaders (Tib. tsondzin). Another five hundred fighters had been dispersed to various sites like Chongye, Drachi, and Dranang. In addition, there were another seven hundred to eight hundred fighters in a regiment under Jagö Namgyal Dorje who were located east of Lhoka in Dakpo/Kongpo. However, he was told that Jagö refused to obey orders from the main headquarters at Lhagyari.

Radru Ngawang met with the leaders who had been appointed by Gombo Tashi before he left to discuss the situation and recalled:

> I told the meeting what Andru Jinda [Gombo Tashi] was thinking, and how we had fought many battles, and our plans. At that moment, they were showing me great respect. . . . I told them, "All of us have to sacrifice everything to fight the Chinese and safeguard the security of the H. H. the Dalai Lama. These two things are our only duty." . . . We held meetings and discussed making preparations for war, and especially the need to recall all those fighters from Dakpo. However, the leaders at Lhagyari repeatedly told me that Jagö regiment's fighters were not listening to the main headquarters and had basically set up their own autonomous base in Dakpo.

Radru Ngawang explained further what they told him,

> He [Jagö] had volunteered to go to find and bring back Andrutsang (Gombo Tashi), but instead of doing that, he had just stayed in Dakpo for several months. [As a result] The miser's leaders in Dakpo submitted a petition to the main headquarters asking us to recall them, because they couldn't sustain [providing supplies] to these fighters for such a long time. The populace's petition said, "We will supply whatever food is needed for your people and horses, but if the fighters remain in Dakpo for a long time, that will cause difficulties for us, so we request that the main headquarters recall them back to Lhoka." As a consequence, the main headquarters sent an order to Jagö Namgye Dorje saying that he should either leave now to go to find Gombo Tashi, or he should return to the main headquarters [at Lhagyari].[53]

Jagö Namgyal Dorje refused this, saying in his reply letter, "I am going to bring back Andru Jinda (Gombo Tashi). Maybe we will be able to bring him back, but maybe we will get destroyed completely. But I swear by the three jewels that we won't come back until then."[54] At that time, Gombo Tashi was still in the Shotalhosum area and Radru Ngawang was in Phembo. The incident mentioned in a previous chapter, where Jagö Namgyal Dorje arrogantly walked out of a meeting with the head of a Tibetan dzong who was complaining about the abuses of his troops, was illustrative of the high-handed way he and his fighters were operating in Dakpo/Kongpo.

---

[53] Ibid.

[54] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2003, H.0012.08.

Despite hearing all this, Radru Ngawang told the leaders of the main headquarters that they had to send representatives to Dakpo to bring Jagö's force back to Lhagyari, since it seemed obvious to him that to ensure that Lhoka remained clear of Chinese, Chushigandru would need all its fighters. The Lhagyari leaders, however, were adamant that it was impossible for them to accomplish this because their relations with Namgyal Dorje and his men were poor. Instead, they were urging that Radru should go to meet Namgyal Dorje himself. He recalled this,

> I was told to go to talk with them [Jagö and the others] by the leaders. . . . "If you go and tell them the story of Andru Jinda (Gombo Tashi), they will listen to you. Otherwise, if we go, they will not listen." At that time, those in in the main regiment didn't get along well with them and they were saying that 'that person' [Jagö] was something else. Actually, all of us were volunteers and nobody was being paid any salary, so if people didn't think in a proper way, then giving orders would not work very well. Only the orders from Andru Jinda would work for everybody. I had been working very hard in the north and had become famous, and they [the Jagö group] probably had heard about this, so the leaders in Lhagyari said that they will listen to me.[55]

So Radru Ngawang went to Dakpo with two other commanders, including the prominent Khamba leader Chamdo Dortse. As he explains below, he succeeded, but even with his high stature and fame, it was not easy.

When they first arrived in Dakpo, Jagö and his men had already gone to Wölkha Chöling in search of Gombo Tashi, so Radru and the others had to come back and cross the ferry site at Rong Lukhang and then head on to Wölkha Chöling [, which was north of the river]. When he caught up with them there, Radru recalled,

> Chamdo Dortse and I told them to summon a meeting because we have to talk about things. That meeting was held in the upstairs Assembly Hall of the Wölga Chöling Monastery. . . . At that time, all of the great persons were there. like Jagö Namgyal Dorje, Litang Alo Dawa, Phuma Rignam, who was a chief in Derge, and Bachung Pön, et cetera. There were people from Chamdo, Chantreng, Markham, and Traya. All together there were about six hundred to seven hundred riders there.
>
> I told them everything that happened to Andru Jinda in detail, as well as about the dangers in Lhoka, and about the Chinese trucks and soldiers that were arriving in Lhoka [in Tsetang] [and about his ambush]. . . . I also said that while Gombo Tashi is important, how are you planning to get him, since you don't know exactly where he is. And even if you could go down [and find him], how are you going to come back, since your horses will be exhausted and Gombo Tashi will have already changed his [worn-out] horses with those of the populace [so there will be no fresh mounts].

---

[55] Radru Ngawang, Interview, India, 1992, H.0012.03.

So instead of doing this, you should be careful and should just send messengers. Moreover, if Gombo Tashi would come back here [on his own from one side], while you guys are going up on another side, Gombo Tashi will then have to send people to go to bring you guys back.

The meeting lasted for three days, but [there was no progress] since Namgyal Dorje and his people had already sworn that they would never return [to Lhagyari] until they had brought back Gombo Tashi or until all of them were dead. . . . They were not listening to us at all, so I went to see Jagö Namgyal Dorje late one evening, since he was the main person. I told him, let's go outside for awhile. . . . Then I told him that I have something to tell you that I haven't told even to my relatives or the people I share my food with or even Alo Dawa [his fellow Litangpa] who is here. I am telling you this, and you should keep this in mind and consider it well, but first you have to swear that you will never tell anybody about this [what I tell you]. So we took an oath by putting our guns on our head. That was a Khamba custom. And he asked me what was the matter.

I told him that he should think carefully about what I say. Gombo Tashi is very important . . . but the most important thing is H.H. the Dalai Lama. He can no longer stay in Lhasa, so if we are not able to make a good plan in Lhoka, and if the [Chushigandru] regiments in Lhoka are scattered, we will be defeated very easily. If that happens and we are destroyed, and then everything will be useless. Therefore, you should think about this carefully.

[In another interview he said he added] I told him [that] I had talked with Lord Chamberlain Phala [who had said] that the Dalai Lama can no longer stay in Lhasa. . . . [Phala and his people] will be working carefully on the inside [in Lhasa] and you (Chushigandru) must do your best and get prepared outside. So I told him [Jagö], "Because the Dalai Lama can no longer stay in Lhasa, is Andru Gombo Tashi more important or is the Dalai Lama more important? We have to do this work very carefully." . . . To this Namgyal Dorje said, "What you have said is very good, so tomorrow [at the meeting] Chamdo Dortse and you should make a suggestion about [what to do], and I will say that I agree with you." . . .

The next day, when we held the meeting, Jagö Namgyal Dorje praised me very much . . . and then he said," Today, Dortse and you should give us orders, and we do not have any choice but to accept it. We should not think about the small matters." At that moment, all people were looking at Namgyal Dorje's face.

To this I said, "We don't have any orders to give you. But you guys should swear that you will agree with whatever Namgyal Dorje tells you." Then I took down a statue of the Buddha, and I told them, "Chamdo Dortse and I came here for the common cause, we don't have any private purpose." So first, Chamdo Dortse and I put the statue on our heads, then I put that statue on all of their heads. We were swearing that we would trust each other.

After that, I told them, "Andru Jinda is important, but the situation for the main regiment is very dangerous. And it is dangerous for H.H. the Dalai Lama to stay in Lhasa. If we cannot make a good plan in Lhoka, I swear by the three jewels that it will cause us to destroy ourselves as well as others. We know about this matter, so came here

> for this purpose." Then all of them were telling me to give an order, but I told them that I don't have an order to give you, but I think that we should hold a meeting [of all of Chushigandru's fighters and leaders in Lhoka and Dakpo]. You guys have sworn by the three jewels that you are not going back to the main regiment [at Lhagyari], so we should get together and meet at the Rong Lukhang ferry site [that is, at a "neutral site"]. Everyone agreed with that, and all of the commanders, tsondzins, and fighters moved to the Rong Lukhang ferry site. We held the meeting at the Lukhang ferry site on the first through sixth of the twelfth Tibetan month [10–15 January 1959]. . . .
>
> After we had all gathered together, we [made a battle plan to defend all the southern major areas and] divided up the fighters to make war there. We planned to build a regiment in the area from Gonggar upwards and from Nyetang downwards. Then soldiers had to go to the Rama ferry site. Alo Dawa was appointed as a Commander and he was sent to Samye. And we sent about 300–400 riders from Chamdo, Derge and Markham to Wölkha Zingche to wage guerrilla war in Kongpo Gyashing, Bala, and Nyintri. All this was done so we would start fighting as soon as possible. . . . We also arranged to send troops to be on guard/watch at Nangkartse and Tsang, as there was not much danger of war there. . . . We sent Traya Lama Adru, Amdo Legshey, and Minyag Abo Yontan to Nangkartse with about 150 riders. Also, Litang Kunga Samden, Chamdo Jangri Lhagyal, and Derge Chudo Pön were assigned to defend the area from Gonggar Dzong up to Nyethang and to make guerilla warfare against the trucks coming [down] from Tölung Tsurphu. . . . They had about 700 soldiers. . . .
>
> It was also decided to attack Tsetang. We had about 500 cavalry for this, including me, Ngawang Yönten from Traya, Seysey and Bachen from Taryge Gomba, and Baba Gen Ale.[56]

Radru Ngawang, actually, did not like the Tsetang plan and did not want to be a part of an attack against a well-fortified compound, so he told them that he was planning to make military plans to conduct guerrilla warfare everywhere. The other leaders and fighters at the general meeting, however, were insisting that this Litang hero had to come with them, so they said that before deciding on that, we must consult the protector deity. As a result, the prophecy said that Commander Radru Ngawang should be the one to fight in Tsetang because he has the ability and strength to accomplish that. So then everyone said he had to go and fight in Tsetang, which he did.

Radru Ngawang's reluctance was not surprising. The Khamba fighters in Sichuan and in Tibet were terrible at frontally attacking fortified compounds, even when they outnumbered the Chinese. Such attacks usually ended in a kind of siege, which lasted until Chinese reinforcements arrived, at which point the Khambas fled. This had happened repeatedly in Sichuan, and in Tibet it happened, for example, in January 1959 when Gombo Tashi attacked Powo Tramo but was unable to take control of that well-armed compound and had to flee when reinforcements from Chengdu were arriving. This pattern, moreover, had already happened once at Tsetang, in October 1958.

---

[56] Ibid.

THE FIRST ATTACK ON TSETANG

Before Gombo Tashi left for Shang Ganden Chöngor, there had been talk at Chushigandru's military headquarters about attacking the Chinese at Tsetang, since that was the only Chinese administrative center in Lhoka (south of the Yarlungtsangpo River), but Gombo Tashi and others senior commanders like Radru Ngawang disagreed. Gombo Tashi wanted to wait until he returned with his fighters and the new weapons and then plan an attack. The Chinese were not moving out from there to attack Drigutang, so he felt there was no rush to do anything. Radru Ngawang recalled, "We said that if we resort to just small attacks and if we cannot fight well and destroy the Chinese at Tsetang, then they, the Chinese, will [come to learn how to] get prepared for us and it will not be good, so we just left it alone."[57] However, two months later, when Gombo Tashi wasn't there, it was decided to attack Tsetang, which they did on 22 October 1958, just as Namseling was arriving in Lhoka. Namseling, as was seen, met some of the fighters on their way to do battle, and had also advised them not to attack for awhile, but they did not listen and continued on.

The Chinese in Tsetang were mostly located at Gangbu, which was their administrative compound located on a mountainside about half a mile from the main town. There was a company (Ch. lian) of about 100–200 PLA troops there, as well as a PLA platoon located near to Tsetang town that probably had about 25 troops. However, all the nonsoldier cadres had been trained in how to use weapons and defend against attacks. In addition, the Chinese had built strong fortifications including tunnels, had good communications equipment, and importantly were armed with heavy and light machine guns and mortars. This compound would not be easy for the Khambas to overrun.

An official Chinese source explained the first attack:

> Armed rebels attacked our guards at Tsetang, Lhoka. On the night of 22 October, more than 700 armed rebels headed by Jama Samphel attacked our guard troops who were protecting the town of Tsetang. This company fought back and the enemy withdrew. On the night of the 23rd, the armed rebels attacked us four times, but these all failed and they fled. Then on the 25th, the whole group of armed rebels retreated. Our military disabled [Ch. jian] more than 50 of their men.[58]

---

[57] Ibid.

[58] Zhonggong xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 22 October 1958, 79.

Another Chinese source explained this battle in more detail. This account is revealing, because it illustrates that while the Khambas fought well, they didn't have heavy enough weapons such as mortars and bazookas to overpower these numerically small, but well-armed and well-dug-in defenders.

> The ninth company and the Work Team [cadres] assumed that their enemies were about to launch an attack against them, so on 15 October, the Party Committee of the Work Team and the cadres of the ninth company decided to improve their military fortifications. They strengthened their guards and the communications capabilities between Tsetang and Gangbu, which were one kilometer apart. They also dispatched troops with machine guns to defend the positions and tried to locate the rebels as early as possible in order to avoid giving the rebels any chance of launching a sudden surprise attack.
>
> On 17 and 18 October, about 700 rebels who had previously been stationed at (Yarlung) Potrang and Chongye started to move toward Nedong and Tsetang . . . and on 22 October, at around 4 A.M., the rebels moved toward the mountain where the ninth company was stationed. By around 5 A.M., the rebels had occupied all the mountaintops near Tsetang Gangbu and Tsetang town and started to build fortifications. The PLA sentries of the ninth company, who were on guard at Gangbu, heard dogs barking and the sound of digging, and reported this to the political commissar of the company. The political commissar led all his officers at Gangbu to go to see what was going on and they found it was the rebels. The [Chinese] troops then immediately got into their hidden fortifications and the political commissar tried at once to contact the second platoon at Tsetang (town), but the phone line had been cut by the rebels. The political commissar [, therefore,] sent a soldier to inform the second platoon of the enemy's actions, but it was too dark and the soldier did not get there until after the battle had started.
>
> At 7:50 A.M., the armed rebels opened fire at the ninth company. . . . Over 300 armed rebels were occupying the mountaintops around Gangbu, and they tried to block the main firepower of the ninth company from reinforcing the second platoon stationed at Tsetang, where over 400 rebel soldiers had attacked the second platoon in an attempt to wipe it out before they launched an attack on the main force (the ninth company [in Gangbu]). [However], the rebels did not succeed, because the firepower of the second platoon was too strong. After dawn, the rebels stopped their attack on the second platoon, since they feared that in daytime battles the PLA would have an advantage over them. However, they kept firing rifle volleys combined with sporadic sniping, trying to besiege the PLA troops of the ninth company at Tsetang and Gangbu.
>
> The rebels did not launch any attacks during the daytime on the 23rd. Then from 12 A.M. to 1 A.M., the rebels started to move to the flat land to the north of the Tsetang Hospital, and to a house owned by Dorje in the south which was higher than the position of the second platoon. At the same time, from Donglinga, some rebels moved by way of an embankment toward the PLA's position at Tsetang, which was about 100 meters from Donglinga. At around 2 A.M., under bright moonlight, the

rebels used the terrain near Dorje's house to attempt to break into the low southern wall of the second platoon's military camp, using massive firing. When the rebels charged, the second platoon fired at them fiercely with machine guns and other weapons. The rebels were unable to resist our fire so they withdrew right away and then turned to attack the northern and northeast sides of the second platoon's position. When the rebels were as close to the wall as only a dozen meters, the PLA soldiers of the second platoon fired back with heavy machine guns and rifles. Since our firing was really intense, the rebels had to withdraw. . . .

Half an hour later, the rebels reorganized themselves to launch another charge at the position of the second platoon from the northeast side, by means of the advantageous terrain near Dorje's house together with the help of the rebels' firing from Donglinga. The moon was down at the time, and the rebels attacked the second platoon by means of flashlights. When they reached a place very close to us, Qi Xue, the vice political commissar, ordered the soldiers to fire at the rebels and to throw grenades at them. The rebels suffered heavy casualties and had to withdraw again.

Soon, they launched another attack. They rushed to a house next to the military camp of the second platoon and lit the house on fire with kerosene. Then they threw burning hay with kerosene toward the PLA camp, trying to set it on fire too. However, at that moment the wind blew toward the other direction, so the camp did not catch fire. Under cover of the heavy smoke, the rebels launched another fierce attack at the second platoon, but were beaten back once again by massive firing of the second platoon. Then the rebels turned to set fire to three heaps of hay which had been made by the masses on the wheat fields in the south. And with the help of the light produced by the fire of the hay, they continued to attack the second platoon. But because the second platoon's firing was very fierce, this time the rebels failed once again. . . . Later on, the rebels set up two machine guns on top of Dorje's house, which posed a severe threat to the second platoon.

In order to stop the rebels . . ., Qi Xue requested the political commissar to use "82-style" mortars to fire at the rebels who were besieging the second platoon. Right away the political commissar ordered the artillery troops to reinforce the second platoon. Qi Xue collected useful information about the locations of the rebels and told the information to the artillerymen by means of a walkie-talkie. Our artillerymen fired 32 rounds at the enemy, of which 8 dropped on top of Dorje's house, disabling the rebels there who earlier had been shouting loudly. Supported by this artillery fire, the second platoon finally managed to beat back the rebels' attack.

At 5:00 A.M. and during the daytime, the rebels remained quiet. Grasping this opportunity, Qi Xue and the cadres of the work team held a meeting at which they first discussed how to cope with more attacks from the rebels. Qi also asked the soldiers not to leave the battlefield if they were only slightly wounded, and he also criticized two soldiers who were injured by the rebels because they did not carefully observe the PLA's discipline to hide themselves. . . .

During the battles on the past two nights, the rebels had suffered heavy casualties, so that night they did not launch a new attack against the second platoon. Over the past two nights, the second platoon had also suffered heavy casualties, so its soldiers

> were not in high spirits and their morale was affected. Zhu Jinyun, the commander of the second platoon, tried to mobilize the soldiers by announcing the rules concerning discipline on the battlefield. According to these rules, any soldiers who attempted to escape would be severely punished. This calmed down the soldiers' emotions and they were ready to resist the rebels' attacks.
>
> On the night of the 24th and during the daytime of the 25th, the rebels ceased to attack the second platoon. And then on the fourth day, most of the rebels gradually withdrew, and only a small number of them were left to provide cover for the rebels' main force to withdraw. . . . Though the enemy did not break the defensive line of the ninth company, the PLA suffered heavy casualties. The fact that the PLA had suffered heavy losses in the battle and the armed rebels had actually taken the upper hand during the battle strengthened the confidence of the Kashag and the other upper-class reactionaries to launch the rebellion. They intentionally ignored the orders of the TWC and the Tibet Military Headquarters asking them to stop the rebellion.[59]

Seysey, one of the Chushigandru commanders in the attack, also described what happened, albeit in not much detail,

> When we entered the sentry post and the house, many of us were killed. . . . I was also wounded by gun shots and was bedridden for two months. The fighting lasted for fifteen days, but we couldn't take over their building, so we retreated. . . . The Chinese threw hand grenades at us but we didn't have any to throw back, so we just put some water or urine in bottles and threw that towards them. We could not take over their buildings, but we killed Chinese and many of us were also killed.[60]

Seysey's duration times are not correct, but he agreed with the Chinese accounts as to the outcome. Both the Khambas and the Chinese suffered many killed and wounded, but in the end, Chushigandru was unable to defeat the Chinese there. Kedram, a captain in the Tibetan army, was very critical of the Khambas' tactics in Tsetang, despite being a strong supporter of Chushigandru and the insurgency. He said,

> After they got established at Drigutang, they fought once or twice at Tsetang. This was like teaching the Chinese to be smart, because they were fighting and then leaving them alone, and then fighting again; so the result was that the Chinese got prepared [learned how to deal with their attacks].[61]

Despite this defeat, it was decided at the Chushigandru meeting in January 1959 that if they were to keep Lhoka clear of Chinese, they had to again attack the Chinese headquarters at Tsetang. However, as we saw above, Tsetang had just received many truckloads of weapons and supplies and additional troops from Lhasa, so this would be a much more formidable task than the first campaign.

---

[59] Ji Youquan 1993b, 60–63.

[60] Seysey, interview, India, 1991, H.0042.01 and H.0042.02.

[61] Kedram, interview, India, 1992, H.0041.03.

THE SECOND TSETANG ATTACK

The second Tsetang attack started in broad daylight in mid January 1959, when hundreds of Chushigandru fighters attacked the TWC Branch compound at Gangbu. The Chinese had time to prepare well and had both fortified their buildings and constructed elaborate tunnels and underground rooms. Chushigandru was not able to overrun their headquarters, despite again outnumbering the defenders. However, unlike the first series of attacks in 1958, this time the Khambas did not withdraw and instead surrounded the Chinese facility and launched a full-scale siege that lasted seventy-four days.[62] Radru Ngawang, explained that this started on 19 January,

> So we fought at Tsetang starting on the tenth day of the twelfth Tibetan month [19 January 1959]. We had made all kinds of preparations. . . . And we surrounded and attacked them.
>
> The Chinese were well dug in with water and food. . . . We fought for three to four months. All the fighting was done at night. There were many casualties, but we could not dislodge them. We went in the underground rooms/tunnels [Ch. dong] and fought there. The dong were as big as houses. The battle became big.[63]

A Chinese source described the attack and siege as follows,

> The TWC Branch in Southern Tibet took action quickly. All the cadres, workers, and their family members organized together to defend the TWC Branch and themselves. The PLA troops were responsible for defending the high elevation areas on the north and south of the TWC Branch office, while the other tasks of defense were given to the civilian workers. There were over one hundred people, old and young, in the TWC Branch, many of whom lacked any fighting experience. . . .
>
> The rebels completely surrounded the TWC Branch on January 25. On Jan. 26 and 27, they launched fierce attacks on the high areas on both sides of the TWC Branch. Since the number of enemies far exceeded the number of the PLA troops, they broke through the PLA's defense line, but our PLA soldiers fought very hard, and eventually defeated the enemies. The rebels just could not get rid of us as they had planned. . . .
>
> The rebels did not withdraw. They became more cunning. They started to build their defense system around the TWC Branch. Their tunnels were like poisonous snakes, extending here and there around us. They launched frequent attacks at us. Sometimes, they pretended to hit here, but they were actually attacking from another

---

62. Zhao Junwen 1989; Zhao Junwen 2014.

63. Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 1992, H.0012.09.

> direction. Sometimes, they tried to sandwich us in the middle and attack us from two directions at the same time. They also tried to break through our defense line at one point. . . .
>
> The rebels failed again and again in their attacks against us, so they gradually understood that they could not possibly defeat us through such attacks, and they had to change their tactics. So then they cut off our water and fuel supplies. They claimed that they could easily starve us to death. We had children with us at the time. It was a new test for each of us. . . .
>
> When the water supplies above ground were cut off, we had to get water from underground. Comrades of the TWC Branch and the PLA troops shared one well. The comrades tried to consume as little water as possible. We took turns to wash our faces in one basin of water every few days. Everyone tried to take good care of the wounded and the sick, and no one washed clothes.
>
> We had to solve the problem of fuel. We had to get some wood [as it would have been bitterly cold in January]. Under unified organization, our wood cutting groups went to get wood from the forest areas that were under the close surveillance of the enemy. It took a lot of guts, flexibility, and physical strength to do this job. . . . We only went to cut wood at night. To ensure safety for everyone, group members all carried weapons. They were also protected by fully armed soldiers who watched the rebels from high spots. Most of the time, the groups finished their tasks smoothly, so we were able to continue cooking at our battleground and we had cooked meals. Of course, we tried to use our wood carefully and save it, for example, we made steamed bread that could last for several days and then we cut the bread into slices to dry. When we were hungry, we had those dried steamed bread, washed down by cold water.
>
> After a while, the rebels found out about our nighttime wood cutting activities and once, when the rebels occupied our high spots, our group encountered the rebels shortly after they left our battleground. Since we had made good preparations beforehand and we were experienced already in such activities, the group drove away the rebels and withdrew safely. . . .[64]

In Beijing, the second Tsetang battle was an event of enough significance that it came to the attention of Peng Dehuai, the head of the Chinese military,

> Peng Dehuai, who was in charge of the Central Military Committee at the time, instructed us, saying "Hold on to the region of southern Tibet. If you can hold the region, it itself is a victory."[65]

In the end, both sides claimed victory. The Chinese side was able to hold on to Tsetang despite being outnumbered and besieged for over two months, so were able to keep a foothold south of the Yarlungtsangpo in Lhoka. The Tibetan side, although failing to take control of Tsetang, succeeded in confining the Chinese and not allowing them either to increase the size and strength of their forces in Tsetang or to possibly expand out to other parts of Lhoka. Consequently, Chushigandru was able to assure Phala after the 10 March demonstrations that the Lhoka escape route was safe for the Dalai Lama as it was completely free of PLA forces, although, to be sure, this was mainly the result of Beijing's orders that the PLA was not permitted to go on the offense in Lhasa or Lhoka.

---

[64] Zhao Junwen 1989, 79–83.

[65] Zhao Junwen 1989, 85.

While this was playing out in Tsetang, other groups of Chushigandru were deployed defending the different river ports and looking for opportunities to ambush convoys.

The arrival of Commander Radru Ngawang in Lhoka after his famous ambush at Gonggar, therefore, had an important impact on Chushigandru in Lhoka and led to the reestablishment of stricter internal discipline and adherence to Chushigandru's overall command structure. One can only wonder how different the insurgency would have been if Gombo Tashi had been able to return immediately to Drigutang from Shang Ganden Chöngor in September 1957 as he had planned, or if he had not gone at all.

NAMSELING AND CHUSHIGANDRU'S MISSION TO KALIMPONG

After reaching Chushigandru headquarters in Lhoka and giving them the kashag's edict, Namseling and Samjog tried to work with the Khambas and local district officials to create a more organized and efficient system that would regularize providing food and supplies to the Khambas and reduce the harm to local Tibetans. Namseling, like Gombo Tashi, was convinced that in the long run, an insurgency against the Chinese in Tibet could not succeed without the support of the local communities, and this would be difficult to obtain and to sustain if the Khambas were stealing from the locals and treating them high-handedly.

It was also clear to Namseling that for the insurgency to be successful, its size would have to be drastically increased by recruiting local Tibetan villagers to join militia regiments that would fight beside Chushigandru. Namseling was thinking of recruiting ten thousand militia fighters in Southern Tibet. However, since Central Tibetans generally did not have their own private weapons, it would mean securing a large amount of guns and ammunition to make them into a viable fighting force. Moreover, they and Chushigandru would thereafter need a steady supply of arms and ammunition. Some of these could be captured from the Chinese, but it was critical for Chushigandru to find a secure source of weapons if they were going to be able to engage in sustained battles in multiple areas thoughout Tibet.

However, as we saw, Phala had made it clear that he could not provide such weapons from the arsenal in Lhasa and still maintain the façade of Sino-Tibetan cooperation, so this support would have to come from outside Tibet—from India, Taiwan, the CIA, or hypothetically, from covertly buying and smuggling munitions into Tibet. Namseling, consequently, thought it was critical that Chushigandru immediately send a small delegation of leaders to India to try secure concrete outside support from the United States and/or Taiwan or even from individual gun dealers.

Namseling also started to recruit local Tibetan militias in anticipation of securing more weapons. Chamba Yönden, the dzongpön of Lhagang Dzong in Lhoka, said he had been instructed by Namseling to conscript recruits, and he recalled what happened,

> At that time in Lhagyari, the Tsipön and the Khenjung [Namseling and Samjog] came and became like overall leaders. They sent an edict to Lhakhang (dzong) telling us to recruit people between the ages of eighteen and sixty. We recruited about twenty-five volunteers from our Lhakhang Dzong. We made them brand-new clothing and shoes, but they didn't have any weapons. We made beer and gave them a party and did worship to the deities and asked the oracles to go into trance. Then we sent them off to Lhagyari and they were supposed to then go wherever they were needed from there. They were just untrained militia. Later [after the Uprising], when all the people fled [to India], they came back home. . . .
>
> Q. Did you receive an order from Namseling and Samjog regarding the recruitment of a militia?
>
> A. Yes.
>
> Q. How did you hold meetings after that, and to whom did you tell that volunteer militia should come?
>
> A. I told the people under the jurisdiction of the dzong . . . "Now the situation has come to a critical point. If we stay like this, the only thing that will happen is to be eaten by the Chinese. Now, Chushigandru and all the people in the districts in Lhoka are working hard to stop the Chinese. So if we also don't go and work hard with them, it is not right. The government is losing, and if the government is lost, we won't have any support." When I told them like this, the volunteers came out one after another. Then the society pooled money and made clothing and gave them travel expenses and appointed some leaders and sent them to Lhagyari. They had to get salary [food] from Lhagyari, but after that, nobody took care of them, so they came back.[66]

With Namseling working to collect recruits in Lhoka and the neighboring areas like Takpo, a platoon of regular Tibetan army soldiers was secretly "sent" to Tsang Province in mid January 1959 to help recruit and train militia there. Namgyal Wangdü, one of the Tibetan army lieutenants who was part of that group, recalled this secret mission to train the village militias who were to be recruited.

> I took some [Tibetan] soldiers and arms when they needed someone to go secretly to Drigutang without the involvement of the [Tibetan] Military Headquarters, the gov-

---

[66] Chamba Yönden, interview, India, 1993, H.0017.04.

> ernment, or the regiments. All of them [the soldiers he took] had the qualities of being potential instructors, because if we were able to raise a militia in the southern areas, then they had to be taught. So we took all good men. However, where this came from—the secret organization—I don't know exactly. However, I know that Kungö Lobsang Yeshe, and our commander (Ragashag), and the commander in chief were in this organization. They told me secretly that it is best to just go [to Drigutang], so I did not ask anybody's permission. I went just on my own so nobody else would be blamed for this. If I had asked, then this work of ours would be in danger, so I left on my own decision. Before I took off, I left a letter stating this.[67]

Namgyal Wangdü elaborated further about the organization that planned this activity,

> Lobsang Yeshe of Damba Simkhang was an ex–monk official who had earlier gone to study in Beijing, so he knew Chinese politics and policies well. Then there was our commander in chief, Magji Jangjenlogo Lokela, as well as other government officials. They had a secret organization. From their side, they were thinking that it [the insurrection] would not be okay if we didn't recruit a strong militia from the various regions. They wanted each region to establish their own [militia] organization. When these organizations were well established, they were to make secret relations with the [Tibetan government's] Military Headquarters and they would covertly be given arms. So there were such plans, and when they said that government officials, military personnel, and aristocrats were needed [to work for this], Lobsang Yeshe was suggested as someone who would be good because he was well-educated and was already in this secret organization, so he decided to leave [Lhasa] [for this mission]. . . .
>
> Q. Is he [Lobsang Yeshe] the same person as Ngawang Senge?
>
> A. Yes. So Lobsang Yeshe and I had a talk about this [plan] and then I spoke about it with our commander [Ragashag] of the Gyantse Regiment and told him that Lobsang Yeshe had said such things. At that time, our commander used to like us a lot. He said that this is very secret talk, so you must make sure no one knows about it. If you can go, then that is very good, but you must make sure there are no problems. So then I was the one who got to go. I was a platoon leader [Tib. shengo], and I took along another shengo with me as well as thirty soldiers. They were fully armed and had two Bren guns. Lobsang Yeshe and some Amdos had come with us, and I also had some Khambas from Tsawarong and Jüba with me, so together we secretly left Lhasa.
>
> Our plan was to go and make connections with Gombo Tashi in Lhoka and then we were going to go to Tsang. Since Chushigandru was already present in Lhoka, we were going to recruit militias in Tsang [where they were not present]. When we crossed the Ramagang ferry site and passed the Benza ferry site and got to Gonggar, there were some Chushigandru there like Jangri Lhagye and Litang Kunga Samden. They said that Gombo Tashi was down in Powo and Kongpo and it is said that he will be arriving soon, so please stay here in the meantime. Since we were to make connections with him, we decided to stay and wait.

---

[67] Namgyal Wangdü, interview, India, 1993, H.0020.03.

> Lobsang Yeshe sent two persons with a letter [to Gombo Tashi] saying that we have arrived and this is our plan, so we wish to discuss this with you so it would be good if you could come soon to the southern area. His reply said that he was going to come soon, so we stayed there waiting for two to three months. While we were staying there, we sent letters and people to the nearby areas like Chushul, Nyetang, and Tsang, and from this about one hundred volunteer militia arrived arrived one by one from Tsang . . . but since we were waiting for Gombo Tashi, we couldn't leave for Tsang.
>
> In the meantime, at Tsetang, at Gangbu, a lot of Chinese had dug themselves in and would not leave, so there was fighting taking place daily. Since some of our army soldiers had training and were experienced, they [the Khambas] asked for [our] help, so I sent about ten or fifteen soldiers to them who remained there until the 1959 fighting [the uprising]. So there were some troops with me and some of the rural militias were also with me together with Lobsang Yeshe. Later, there were about fifty or sixty Amdos who wanted Lobsang Yeshe to be their leader. So we were all there together. Then the uprising took place at Lhasa on the tenth of March.[68]

Ironically, many Khambas were not only suspicious about the motives of Namseling, but also those of Athar and Lotse, the CIA's two representatives in Lhoka. Radru Ngawang explained some of the reasons for the Khambas' distrust of them.

> At that time, Athar and Lotse were sending wireless messages to the US. The US had a long-term view in which they first wanted to train the people, but we were thinking in a short-term way, and they didn't know that. At first [in October 1958], they dropped rifles called Tashi Kharing (Lee-Enfield carbines] which held five bullets. . . . They also dropped about twenty Sten guns and some mortars. This was okay for training, but we were fighting battles and we needed [large amounts of] arms right away.
>
> Q. So when Namseling was saying that he will recruit a local militia, what were you people (in Chushigandru) thinking and going to do? Was Namseling thinking that the militia and you people would fight together?
>
> A. If we had gotten arms, we were going to fight together. [However,] Namseling couldn't give orders to us because we all didn't know about him. We only knew that he was a friend of Andru Jinda [Gombo Tashi], but we didn't know about his plans. In Chushigandru, we had our own chiefs . . . and all of us were volunteers who had bought our own guns and horses [they didn't get them from the Tibetan government, who they saw Namseling was representing]. So there was no basis for Namseling to give orders and ask us to follow his ideas. We were separate. Namseling, however, was telling the local populace that Chushigandru is defending our religion and you have to be patient towards them. They will issue receipts for the things that have been taken from you and in the future the government will take care of these. He was going to prepare a militia. If the arms came, they would be given the arms and trained.

---

[68] Namgyal Wangdü, interview, India, 1993, H.0020.02.

> Q. Did the Khambas agree to that?
>
> A. Since the arms support did not come, the plan was an empty one. . . . Without a source of arms, a militia would be useless. So the arms didn't come and the militia was also unable to be recruited. And by then, it was the time for the Dalai Lama to leave. So the two of them [Namseling and Samjog] couldn't do anything with respect to their plan. . . .
>
> Q. When you were in Drigutang, did you send messages through Athar telling the US to support you with many arms?
>
> A. Yes, we did.
>
> Q. What did the US say?
>
> A. *We didn't know whether Athar delivered the messages or not.* Namseling and those people were also telling us that they have to send messages soon. And we also said that we need the arms soon and if we didn't get the arms, it was not okay. We were telling them [Athar and Lotse] that we need the arms. However, they were taking fifteen or twenty [Khamba] bodyguards and going to the mountains while we were fighting the battles.[69] So we really did not meet them at all. They were secretly sending the wireless messages, and they were suspicious [of us]. Actually, they didn't need to suspect us because we were fighting with the Chinese. . . . We needed the arms in an urgent manner, so if they had sent the wireless messages in an urgent manner saying that we have so many people making war, but we have no arms, they could have gotten the arms support. They [Athar and Lotse] didn't do their job well. So we also had several verbal fights on this matter with them.[70]

Despite these unfounded suspicions, in January 1959 Namseling persuaded three very important and influential Chushigandru leaders to make a special trip to India to solicit support in arms and money mainly from Taiwan but also from others. To the insurgents fighting in Lhoka, they were glad that America had started to openly support Chushigandru with arms, but the CIA had failed to follow up their modest initial airdrop in October 1958 with further drops of more and better weapons, so Chushigandru and Namseling were desperate to find another more reliable and committed supporter.[71]

However, Namseling's proposed mission to India produced an open dispute between the Chushigandru commanders fighting in the field and Namseling and the tsondzin civil administrators at Chushigandru's home base, as Radru Ngawang explained,

> The dispute arose when Namseling had discussions with [Jagö] Namgyal Dorje, Sandu Lo Nyendra, and Jangtsa Chöndze [about going to India, and they decided

---

[69] The CIA had told them to stay separate from Chushigandru so they would not get killed or captured if the Chinese attacked Chushigandru's camps.

[70] Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2002 H.0012.04 (emphasis added).

[71] Jama Ngagdruk, interview, India, 2003, H.0229.03.

> that the] three of them should be sent to India. . . .[72] This was after I had come back from the north and I was fighting in Tsetang. After they discussed this themselves, they sent me a letter saying that the three of them had to be sent to India, and that Namseling would remain in Lhagyari and act as the leader. Namgyal Dorje was going to make connections with the Guomindang, and Jangtsa Chöndze was to make publicity about the plans of Chushigandru, while Sandu Lo Nyendra, who was close to Gyalo Thondup, was to tell the entire situation to Gyalo Thondup to see if he could get more support as soon as possible. . . .
>
> Q. Did three of them appoint Namseling to be the representative of Andru Jinda [Gombo Tashi, at headquarters]?
>
> A. Yes. They discussed this and appointed him.
>
> Q. Do you mean to say that Namseling told the three of them to leave, and the three of them appointed Namseling?
>
> A. Yes, Namseling told them that he will be the head and that he needs twenty mounted Litangpa bodyguards. They wrote in this letter that people should sign if they agree to this.
>
> Q. Was it mainly the three of them who made Namseling the head?
>
> A. They had also gotten the approval from all the tsondzins and commanders [at the headquarters].
>
> Q. So they sent a letter to [you, the commanders in] Tsetang, right?
>
> A. Yes. At that moment, there were about ten or fifteen commanders and captains (Tib. gyagpön) in Tsetang. We held a meeting and read the letter at the meeting, and we let all the people speak their opinions. Everyone was agitated. . . .[73]

In another interview, Radru Ngawang clarified the reason for their anger,

> At that time, at the Tsetang battlefield, I called the six commanders and the captains and I told them about the letter and asked their opinions. They said, "At this time, when we are fighting battles, they are going away to flee to India because they are afraid for their lives. If they have their lives [to worry about], we also have our lives. So it is not at all okay if they go. We don't agree to this." Consequently, I sent a letter to them saying that we don't agree to this plan. However, after ten, fifteen, or twenty days, [despite this response,] the three of them left for India.

Litang Athar also spoke about Namseling's plan, and about his own failure to influence either Namseling or the Chushigandru fighters. Athar explained,

> At that time, Jagö Namgyal Dorje, Jangtsa Chöndze and Lo Nyendra were said to be going to India to make connections with the Guomindang and America in order to get weapons support quickly. They held a meeting with Namseling and then the three of them were sent [to India]. This was a horrible plan made by Namseling and it didn't work out well. During the absence of Gombo Tashi, the three of them [who

---

72. Sandu Lo Nyendra had returned from India to fight only in late October 1958. He had met Athar in Bhutan, on the way back from his debriefing (Litang Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.02.

73. Radru Ngawang, interview, India, 2002, H.0012.07.

left] were the better people in Chushigandru, but he [Namseling] didn't let them stay there. He [Namseling] was supposed to do something by himself, but this also didn't work out because Chushigandru and Namseling had a quarrel.

Q. Did Namseling know the work you were doing [for the Americans]?

A. He knew that the two of us were there, because Gombo Tashi and Namseling were very friendly from long ago.

Q. If he knew about that, why did he send three people to get weapons support from Taiwan?

A. At that time . . . we received a letter from the regiment [Chushigandru] asking me whether the three of them should go to secure weapons support. I said, "It is useless for them to go. They shouldn't go. They should stay firmly in the regiment until Gombo Tashi comes back. If somebody needs to talk about weapon support, Gyalo Thondup and Jenkhentsisum and many people from the three provinces of Tibet are in Kalimpong, so they will talk to that person. And the two of us are continuously making contact from here. You have seen that the [first] airdrop of weapon support has already arrived, so you should think about this. If they were not going to support us, they would not have made that drop of weapons by air. Those weapons were divided up [within Chushigandru]. So you should think about whether you should go or not." But, they didn't listen to me and they went to Kalimpong.

Q. At this time, what was their thinking? Did they think the weapons [from the Americans] were not coming fast enough?

A. Yes. They were saying the weapons were not coming quickly and there weren't many weapons. The Khambas were thinking that they needed weapons to fight the Chinese right away. However, the Americans were thinking that if they did that, the Chinese will suppress our main force, because we just had several thousand fighters. At that time, we [in Lhoka] recruited the [local] people from the ages of eighteen to sixty. We said that nobody is allowed to stay home.

[Also,] the Tibetans [Khambas] didn't have any military organization and training. Each person was riding a horse and all of them were going together [in one large group]. And it seemed like the whole area couldn't sustain so many people. Later, we had to tell the elderly and kids [local recruits] to go back home, because it seemed that the regiment didn't know how to move forward. Each person was riding a horse and there were also pack animals. When we arrived at a place, we couldn't get food and drink.

According to the American plan and our training, the people should remain in small groups and sometimes they can even leave their weapons home and go to do farming if it is necessary. If they have to fight at night, go to fight and then come back home and pretend that they didn't fight. That was the guerrilla training [we learned from the Americans].

But the Khambas were not doing that at all. They were just riding a horse, carrying a gun and yelling [the cry *ki*]. [laughter]. It would be hard to work out something [doing that], right? At that time, it was also very hard to give them any training. Even our partners who were our relatives were not listening to what we told them. At that time, I took all the bells that hung on the horses' necks [that traditionally made a

> ringing noise when the horses traveled] and I broke them and threw them into the river. So when we were traveling together [that day], they didn't hang the bells. But on the next day when they were going somewhere [without me], they again hung the bells on their horses' necks. The Tibetans were kind of enamored with doing that.[74]

Nevertheless, despite the objections of Athar and Lotse and many of the Chushigandru battle commanders, the proposed mission to Kalimpong went ahead.

THE CHUSHIGANDRU MISSION IN KALIMPONG

Sandu Lo Nyendra, Jagö Namgyal Dorje and Jangtsa Chöndze arrived in Kalimpong in February 1959. Jama Ngagdruk, a Chushigandru leader who was from the same homeland as Sandu Lo Nyendra, said that Lo Nyendra discussed what had transpired on his mission after they were both in exile.

> Lo Nyendra told me that they went to see Gyalo Thondup and asked him for support with money and arms, but Gyalo Thondub didn't agree and told them that he didn't have money and arms. Then they went and asked Lhamo Tsering [Gyalo's secretary/aide] about this, but he too didn't help . . . As a result of this, the three contacted the Guomindang [agent in Kalimpong]. Taiwan then agreed to provide them a certain amount of guns and twenty lakhs [2 million] of Indian rupees. Lo Nyendra said, '[However] when we [were about] to go to the Guomindang [to finalize this], we heard that Driguthang had been lost, so we didn't contact the Guomindang.[75]

This was the second time the Khambas had themselves contacted Taiwan, and on both occasions, although Chiang Kai-shek had agreed to support the insurrection, nothing came of it.

The mission also went to try to get donations from wealthy Tibetan traders and aristocrats. One of these, Tsarong Rimshi, an educated, modern-thinking aristocratic official who was then living in Kalimpong, remembered this.

> At that time, Sandu Lo Nyendra, Jagö Namgyal Dorje, and Jamatsang [actually Jangtsa Chöndze] came to me and said that they want a large donation. They said, "The Chinese were making the people suffer, so we are opposing the Chinese." I said, "I don't have anything to donate because I have only just arrived here [in Kalimpong in March 1958]. I have only an empty house and just a little amount of money for my expenses, but I will donate 5,000 rupees as well as some Tibetan currency, probably about 200–300 dotse, so I will donate that also." They said, "This is not at all enough." I said that I don't have more than this to donate. Then they got very angry and said, "This is useless, so we are not going to accept this." I said, "If you don't accept this, I don't have any more than this to donate." Then they told me, "You should write

---

[74] Litang Athar, interview, India, 1995, H.0007.06.

[75] Jama Ngagdruk, interview, India, 2003, H.0229.03.

> down that you donated this amount, but we didn't accept it." I said, "Yes," and I wrote, "I just arrived here so I don't have more than this amount to donate, so they didn't accept it." Then they left in a very agitated manner. At that time, Jamatsang [Jangtsa Chöndze] and Lo Nyendra didn't show much attitude [of anger], but Jagö Namgyal Dorje even shook his buttocks [to show his anger when they left].[76]

Although Tsarong Rimshi was in fact short of cash since he was just in the midst of setting up a new house for the family in Kalimpong, it is also important to realize that some of the more "worldly" Tibetans like Tsarong Rimshi and his famous father, Tsarong Dzasa, who was the champion of the failed attempt at modernization and opening the door to Western ideas and civil and military technology in the 1913–25 period, saw this talk about an insurrection to drive the Chinese out of Tibet as poorly planned and unrealistic. Tsarong Rimshi recalled that once, in the fall of 1958,[77] Gyalo Thondup and Shakabpa tried to persuade his father, Tsarong Dzasa, who had been thinking of returning to Lhasa, to stay in India and lead their movement. Tsarong Dzasa's response reveals his more sophisticated understanding of the situation in Tibet and India, and what it would take to really carry out an insurgency against the Chinese. Tsarong Rimshi recalled,

> When your grandfather [the interviewer was his son] was here, Kungö Gyalo [Thondup] came several times. Once my father also visited him in Darjeeling. At that time, Shakabpa and those people came here and told my father, "Do not go back to Tibet. We don't have a better leader here, so please lead us, because from the early times you have had good experience opposing [the Chinese]." He told them, "I could lead you to oppose them, but what would I do?" They said, "You would strive to obtain Tibetan independence." Then my father told them, "*From early times, we have searched for the means for Tibet to become independent. At the time of the British, the so-called suzerainty [for Tibet] was created. No matter what kind of method we used, we could not get rid of the [label of] suzerainty. We already used all kinds of [diplomatic] methods, but nobody took notice of us and it was impossible. The only way was to carry guns and make war and win a victory. But if we have to do this, we don't have the manpower and money. So what kind of idea do you have for us to depend on to obtain this?* They said, "We have foreign support." Then he [Tsarong Dzasa] said, "*You are saying that you have support from foreign countries. What support do you have? Just show me the support you have. If the support is like one or two lakhs or ten to twenty lakhs of rupees, that would be useless. You need millions of dollars. Show me this and then I will lead you. We don't have soldiers and weapons, but if you show me a reliable and strong supporter, we can hire soldiers called mercenaries from Europe, England, and from everywhere.*" They just said, "Yes, we have it." Then he said, "This

---

[76] Tsarong, interview, India, 1991, H.0043.01.

[77] Tsarong Dzasa left Kalimpong on 2 September 1958 to return to Lhasa via Gangtok. He left Gangtok for Lhasa on 19 September, so this meeting probably occurred in August 1958 (Paljor Tsarong, personal communication).

> is not enough, we can't do anything with this. If you don't have that support, I am not going to stay here and lead you. I am going back to Tibet to serve the Dalai Lama, because the Dalai Lama is there."[78]

Tsarong Dzasa returned to Lhasa on 19 September 1958 and, after participating in the 1959 uprising, died in prison in 1959.[79]

Namseling's attempt to help Chushigandru develop good relations with the local populace and recruit thousands of Central Tibetan peasants, therefore, failed. The Khamba military commanders did not trust him and the CIA did not step up to provide weapons to arm those recruits.

Chushigandru at this time, therefore, was an insurrection with a big goal, but no road map of how to achieve that goal and, critically, it had no safe haven outside of Tibet and no reliable outside source of military supplies and weapons. In fact, up to the time when the Dalai Lama crossed over to India on 30 March 1959, the CIA had made only two airdrops, which together contained weapons for only about three hundred fighters, and these were old, low-quality weapons.

So although the CIA's in-house history of the Tibet project called it "one of the most romantic programs of covert action undertaken by the agency,"[80] in reality, with respect to assisting the Chushigandru insurrection in Tibet, it was a failure that indirectly played a major role in helping to destroy traditional Tibetan society.

Nevertheless, in the latter half of 1958 and early 1959, continuing ambushes and attacks by Chushigandru in different parts of Tibet, prompted Mao and the Central Committee to turn sour on the likelihood that their gradualist policy would succeed. This, along with other actions by the Kashag, will be examined in chapter 11.

---

78. Tsarong, interview, India, 1991, H.0043.01. This was told by Tsarong Dzasa's son Rimshi to his son Paljor.

79. Tsarong 2000, 135.

80. Thomas 1995, 276.

11

At the Edge of the Precipice

As was discussed in previous chapters, Mao overrode Fan Ming and implemented the "Great Contraction" campaign to calm the anxiety and anger among the Lhasa elite and thereby allow his gradualist strategy more time to win over Tibetans and the Dalai Lama. However, new developments quickly threatened the effectiveness of that program. First, in 1957, the Khambas from Sichuan created the formal insurrection organization Chushigandru to fight the Chinese. At the same time the United States began active support for the insurgents by exfiltrating six young Khambas for training from Kalimpong to Saipan Island and parachuting them back into Central Tibet and Sichuan toward the end of 1957. Then, in mid 1958, one to two thousand Chushigandru fighters secretly departed Lhasa to set up a military insurgency base in Lhoka. Not long after this, starting in August 1958, fighting between Chushigandru and the Chinese began when Gombo Tashi left for Shang Ganden Chöngor and, as was examined in chapter 10, continued after that. The calm that Mao had hoped to create by the Great Contraction, therefore, was severely challenged, as both the TWC and the Kashag were forced to focus their attention on what to do to control the Khamba fighters and quell the nascent rebellion before it escalated into a large-scale revolt.

As mentioned previously, the Chinese considered this an internal Tibetan issue and insisted it was the Kashag (Tibetan government)'s responsibility to take concrete action to rein in the Khambas. Mao and the Central Committee were adamant that the PLA should not take the lead, as this would turn the Chushigandru issue into a Tibetan versus Chinese affair, just as the uprising in Sichuan had become. Instead, they were urging the Kashag to use the Tibetan army to try to diffuse the Khamba threat, which the Kashag and the National Assembly rejected.

Not surprisingly, most of the Kashag's work in the second half of 1958 was concerned with the Khambas. Gyegyepa, the Kashag's secretary/aide (Tib. gadrung) recalled that "The Khambas were causing disturbances and were killing and stealing from the [local] people, and the Chinese would give us reports all the time and tell us to put a stop to this. . . . The kalöns and Chinese officials were discussing this situation all the time."[1]

However, once the Tibetan government decided not to deploy the Tibetan army, the Kashag had no good options left, but still felt it had to continue to take steps to show the Chinese they were serious about this problem. One such step, discussed in chapter 9, was to send the Namseling mission to Lhoka. Another step was to prepare a major edict from the Dalai Lama. There is no copy of this edict, but we know the gist of it from Chinese sources, because Kalön Ngabö showed a draft of it to the TWC when he asked for their feedback. The TWC forwarded this to the Central Committee, which commented about it in a telegram dated 14 November 1958. The Central Committee's response said,

> [To the] TWC:
>
> The telegram of October 7th was received. The Central Government agrees with your analysis of the Dalai group's preparation for publicizing the document regarding their opposition to independence activities in Tibet. It is a good thing for the Dalai's group to publicize a document indicating their opposition to any independence activities in Tibet.
>
> However, the content of this document actually goes against the Seventeen-Point Agreement and the Central Committee's policy on Tibetan reforms with respect to two crucial issues. Given the circumstances, namely that the reactionary rebellions in the Tibetan areas in the neighboring provinces have failed, it is in fact an attempt of the Dalai's group to wash themselves clean, so as to avoid their politically passive position and to postpone and oppose social reforms in Tibet through a new means of political struggle.
>
> 1. In terms of the relationship between the Central Committee and the Tibetan local government, the Seventeen-Point Agreement clearly points out, "under the unitary leadership of the Central People's Government, the Tibetan people have the right of regional autonomy (Ch. quyu zizhi)." But in their document, there is no emphasis on *the leadership of the Central Committee,* and no emphasis that *Tibet is an inseparable part of the motherland.* On the contrary, it says, "*within the big family of the motherland, every ethnic group should maintain independence and keep the initiative in one's own hands. [Ch. duli zizhu]*" [and] "*If all the political power [Ch. zheng quan] of Tibet is taken under the control of the Central Committee, there is good reason for the emergence of the idea (of armed rebellion, and opposing the Central Committee).*" *So it is obvious that while they are opposing independence activities in Tibet, they are spreading the idea of Tibetan independence. They are*

---

[1] Gyegyepa, interview, Lhasa, 1992, H. 0011.02.

> *opposing armed rebellion, yet at the same time harboring the idea that they may launch an armed rebellion in the future.* This is completely wrong and reactionary.
>
> 2. Regarding the issue of reforms, the Central Committee has said: "We will not carry out reforms during the second [Tibet] Five-Year Plan [1958–62]. We will decide whether we will carry them out during the third Five-Year Plan [1963–67] according to the situation at that time." We have also said that we will discuss [the reform issue] with them and get their consent. However, the Central Committee has never said, "the way to carry out reforms must be peaceful, and the upper-class people will be in charge of it." . . .
>
> Now that Ngabö has come to ask for the TWC's opinion of the document, we should clearly tell them our attitude. In the meantime, we should try to educate and help Ngabö. You can tell Ngabö that it is a good thing for them to publicize a document to oppose independence activities in Tibet and to oppose armed rebellions in Tibet, but there is something wrong with this document and if they publicize the document as it is now, it is not good for the unity of our motherland and the unity of the different ethnic groups. It is also not good for the development and prosperity of the Tibetan nation, and it is also not beneficial to themselves [the upper-class people], including Ngabö. Therefore, it is better not to publicize the document [as it is]. If they want to publicize it after doing revisions of this document, it would be okay. You can try to persuade them by explaining our position clearly to Ngabö first, so as to let Ngabö persuade them for us. This will be helpful to further win over Ngabö.
>
> *Central Committee*
> *November 14, 1958*[2]

The Kashag apparently was trying to make a case to Tibetans that the current structure in which Tibet was exercising internal autonomy was good for Tibet, so they should not assist the rebels and risk destroying that internal autonomy. However, in doing so, Beijing felt it was overemphasizing Tibet's autonomy and underplaying that this autonomy was *under the Central Committee.* On the other hand, Beijing's response reveals that Mao and the Central Committee were still operating at this time within the framework of Mao's gradualist policy and the Seventeen-Point Agreement. In the end, the Kashag revised the edict to meet Beijing's criticisms and disseminated it.

At the same time, in November 1958, the Kashag took a bold step and tried to bypass the TWC by informing the TWC that it wanted to send a delegation to Beijing to discuss the situation in Tibet directly with China's leaders. This was a major move, because it implicitly conveyed that the Kashag felt it needed to go above the TWC and present its views directly to Mao and the Central Committee.

---

[2] DPRC, "Central Committee's Reply to (TWC's) Inquiry Regarding Dalai's Preparation to Publicize a Document Opposing Any Activities for an Independent Tibet," 14 November 1958 (emphasis added).

There is no record of what the Kashag thought it could accomplish by this, but since we know that the Kashag fundamentally disagreed with the TWC about whose responsibility it was to deal with the Khambas, it is reasonable to surmise that they either felt that the TWC was not accurately representing their views and ideas in Beijing, or that the attitudes of the TWC in Lhasa did not really reflect the views of Mao Zedong and the Central Committee.

As in many other instances, the only record of this overture comes from the Chinese side. Although we do not have the original 16 November communiqué from the TWC to the Central Committee, there was a brief entry in the Party's chronology of important events about this,

> November 16:
>
> Following the patterns of the Kashag and our policy of dealing with these, the Work Committee [TWC] sent reports to the Central Committee which stated the following: Recently the Kashag held official meetings with the Dalai Lama and decided to send a delegation to Beijing. According to the Dalai's direction, this was *in order to clear up misunderstandings that exist between the Central Committee and the Tibetan local government.* The delegation would like to explain things and show positive attitudes to the Central Committee. By doing this, the Kashag wanted to cool down the heated relations between the Central Committee and the Tibetan local government.
>
> However, in fact, their real motive was to use all means to win over the upper class in order to challenge us. At the same time, they were shirking their responsibility and shifting the blame to others regarding the issue of the suppression of the uprising and public security. They were even attempting to pull us into hot water; to get us into trouble.
>
> We will adopt a policy that acts as a countermeasure to them and we will do our best to split them up and make them fall apart [the unity of the elite fall apart].[3] If they want to unify themselves, we will divide them; *if they want to escape responsibility, we will give them full responsibility for putting down the rebellion and maintaining security and make it impossible for them to rise out of the mud.*[4]

The TWC, not surprisingly, was dead set against this, since they must have assumed that the delegation would try to shift the blame for the current stalemate onto them. And given the TWC's strongly negative depiction of the Kashag as secretly supporting the rebels and about how it wanted to shift the blame to others, it is also not surprising that the Central Committee supported the TWC's views and did not agree to the Kashag sending a delegation. Nevertheless, the tone of the Central Committee's response to Lhasa was much more moderate than the sum-

---

3. This was meant to encourage more Tibetans to be "leftists" or "centrists" and less to be in the "reactionary" rightist segment.

4. Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 16 November 1958, 81 (emphasis added).

mary of the TWC's telegram. It not only praised the Dalai Lama for his efforts, but softened its refusal by saying that the Dalai Lama could hold discussions in Beijing if he was able to attend the Second National People's Congress just a few months hence. The Central Committee's reply said,

> [To the] TWC:
>
> The telegrams of November 10 and 16 were received. The Central Committee agrees with your analysis regarding the Dalai group's recent political actions and your measures to handle them. When you answer the Kashag's questions, you can tell them:
>
> *The Dalai's recent instructions to the Tibetan local government and to all government officials are right in asking them to take a positive attitude toward the quelling of the rebellion.* However, the Kashag has put forward an issue that it should send a delegation to Beijing in order to get rid of the misunderstandings of the Central Committee "*toward the Tibetan local government, to ease the tense relationship between the Central Committee and the Tibetan local government, and to clarify their ideas to the Central Committee.*" This view is not right because the Central Committee has a good understanding of the situation in Tibet and therefore there is no misunderstanding here at all. If the Tibetan local government has problems solving their work, they can talk with the TWC, or write to the Central Committee, or send telegrams. It is not necessary and not appropriate for them to send a delegation to Beijing to clarify their ideas under the excuse of "easing the tense relationship." However, it is okay for them to send a few people to inland China to visit and to learn about the Great Leap Forward [Ch. dayuejin] in industry and agriculture. If the Tibetan local government considers this necessary, that can be done.
>
> Also, the first meeting of the Second National People's Congress will be held around March next year (the final date has not been decided) [note: it actually took place in April]. If the Dalai himself thinks it is convenient for him, the Central Committee hopes that he can attend the meeting. At that time, he can tell the Central Committee his own ideas and raise questions [about issues] that need solutions. If so, the investigation and rumors made by imperialists and reactionaries will fail by themselves.
>
> *Central Committee*
> *December 16, 1958*[5]

A well-known Tibetan researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Jiangbian Jiacuo (Jambey Gyatso), has argued that this decision was a major mistake, and suggested strongly that the refusal of the Kashag's request had not actually been approved by Mao and the other top leaders. He wrote that the TWC or some "certain departments of the Central Government" purposefully blocked the

---

[5] DPRC, "The Central Committee's Reply to the Dalai Group's Plan to Send a Delegation to Beijing," 16 December 1958 (emphasis added).

Dalai Lama and the Kashag's attempts to communicate directly to the Central Committee at this time and that had Mao and the Central Committee known of this, they would have agreed and *the problems in Tibet might have been resolved.* This is an intriguing assertion, so let us examine his argument.[6] Jiangbian Jiacuo said,

> Reflecting back, people who do research on Tibet and are familiar with Tibet issues have expressed doubts about which level of organization, and which departments in charge, forbade the "Dalai Clique" to report to the Central Committee in order to "dispel misunderstandings"? This is because there are no instructions regarding this from key leaders such as Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, and Deng Xiaoping among the many documents and materials published by the relevant departments of the Central Committee (Ch. zhongyang youguan bumen) in the past few decades. People doubt whether the Dalai Lama's and the Tibetan local government's opinions, requests, and hopes were reported truthfully to Mao Zedong and the Central Committee by the TWC and "the relevant departments of the Central Committee." If they had reported to Mao Zedong and the Central Committee, there should be some [documents expressing their] opinions because before this, Mao, Liu, Zhou, Zhu, and Deng had told the Dalai Lama, the Panchen Lama, and other Tibetan leaders that they could report to the Central Committee if they have any opinions and questions, and the Central Committee would solve these problems.
>
> The Dalai Lama, as the Vice Chairman [of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC)], and the Director of the PCTAR, which was officially appointed by the State Council, had the right and, more importantly, the obligation and responsibility to report the real situation of Tibet to the Central Committee, Chairman Mao, the Standing Committee of the NPC, as well as the State Council.
>
> [However,] on the one hand, the Dalai Lama and the local Tibetan government were forbidden to send people to Beijing to report the situation to the Central Committee and the Central Government in the name of "the Central Committee." And on the other hand, the TWC made a formal report to the Central Committee stating that "the Dalai Clique" had "in the political sense, broken their connection with us," [and were] "only one step away from officially declaring the independence of Tibet, though they had declared that to their people." This complicated the Tibetan question and made it more difficult for the Central Committee and Mao Zedong to understand the situation in Tibet comprehensively and to deal with the Tibet question correctly.[7]

It is not possible to assess Jiangbian Jiacuo's intriguing claim that the decision to refuse the Kashag's request was kept from the hands of the top officials like Mao and Zhou and Deng. However, the rest of his argument is not convincing, because the Central Committee's instructions of 16 December clearly invited the Dalai Lama to visit Beijing to participate in the Second National People's Congress in March 1959, just a few months away. And despite the TWC's negative assessment of the Tibetan government, the Central Committee still explicitly instructed that, "*At that time, he can tell the Central Committee his own ideas and raise questions [about issues] that need solutions.*" So it is clear that Beijing was not refusing to discuss the problems extant in Tibet. Rather, I suspect, the Central Committee wanted to discuss them with the Dalai Lama, not a delegation from the Kashag. The distinction between the Kashag's representatives versus the Dalai Lama was important in Beijing. The TWC, as discussed, believed that the Kashag was covertly encouraging and supporting the insurrection and therefore was refusing to use force or even the threat of force to disperse the Khambas. Consequently, it is understandable that the TWC would not have wanted the Kashag to choose people to go to Beijing and—in their view—complain to Mao and so forth. On the other hand, the Central Committee still saw the Dalai Lama as more of a sympathetic "progressive," so it made sense for them to want *him* to come and renew positive relations with the top Chinese leaders and discuss outstanding issues *as he had done in 1954*. Doing this, of course, also gave the Dalai Lama extra motivation to agree to attend the Second National People's Congress, of which he was a Deputy Chairman. In addition, it is important to keep in mind that at that time, there seemed to be no great rush to speak with Tibetan leaders in Beijing, since no one on either side thought there would be an uprising in Lhasa in *less than three months.*

---

[6] Jiangbian Jiacuo came to Tibet in 1951 as a thirteen-year-old member of the Eighteenth Army Corps' Song and Dance unit and later became an important translator for the TWC and Chinese leaders.

[7] Jiangbian Jiacuo 2008, 197–98.

After receiving these instructions, Tan Guansan went the next day in person to invite the Dalai Lama to attend the upcoming National People's Congress.

> December 17 (1958): . . . Tan Guansan went to Norbulinga to meet the Dalai. According to the principles laid out in the Central Committee's instructions, he praised the Dalai, saying that it was right for him recently to order the Kashag to take a positive attitude to quell the rebellion. Tan also conveyed to the Dalai the Central Committee's wish that the Dalai should attend the Second National People's Congress. The Dalai Lama replied right away to Political Commissar Tan Guansan saying that he would attend.[8]

The Dalai Lama recalled receiving this invitation and agreeing to attend on the spot.

> One day, towards the end of 1958, Zhang Jingwu [it was actually Tan Guansan] came and said that next year there is to be a meeting of the National People's Congress and

---

[8] Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 17 December 1958, 81. Jiangbian Jiacuo (2008, 208) incorrectly wrote that it was only on 11 March 1959 that the Central Committee instructed the TWC to invite the Dalai Lama to the Second NPC meeting in Beijing.

> Chairman Mao will not assume the Chairmanship, so who would be a suitable substitute? At that time, I said Zhou Enlai would be good. Anyway, the 1959 Lhasa problem was yet to arise, so in late 1958, I agreed to go for the Second National People's Congress.[9]

The Dalai Lama's spontaneous acceptance of the invitation, however, generated concern and opposition among elements of the Tibetan elite, many of whom feared Beijing would not let him return to Lhasa after the meeting. This fear derived from stories that had spread around Lhasa that in Sichuan there had been numerous instances when a lama or chief had been invited by the Chinese to a meeting or banquet and then kept in custody. This same fear had been expressed in 1954 when the Dalai Lama was about to go to inland China, as well as in 1956 in India when the Chinese Ambassador picked up the Dalai Lama at the Delhi train station and drove him in his car to the Chinese Embassy to meet Zhou Enlai. The Dalai Lama recalled that Phala and his bodyguard "feared that I might be kidnapped."[10] However, now with the tense atmosphere enveloping Lhasa because of Chushigandru, three days later, the Kashag reversed its decision about the Dalai Lama going. Again, we know of this only from Chinese sources, in this case, again from the Party chronology.

> December 20:
>
> The Kashag called a meeting to discuss whether the Dalai should go to Beijing to attend the National Congress meeting in Beijing. At the meeting, it was decided that it was not feasible for the Dalai to go to Beijing to attend the People's Congress. At the same time that they told the Dalai Lama of this, they also informed the Working Committee.[11]

Actually, the Kashag could not unilaterally decide for the Dalai Lama about something as important as his trip to China, so they must have persuaded the Dalai Lama not to go and then notified the TWC, saying it was their decision in order to shield the Dalai Lama from criticism from China. In the Tibetan political system, if the Dalai Lama ultimately decided he wanted to attend the Congress meeting in Beijing, he would have prevailed.

BEIJING'S TIBET POLICY CONCERNING THE CHUSHIGANDRU INSURRECTION

1958 was a difficult year for Beijing with regard to Tibetans. In Ganzi (the Khamba area in Sichuan), the PLA was making a major military push to end the rebellion there, and in mid 1958 in Qinghai, Beijing had to send the PLA to quell a major revolt that had broken out there. And in Tibet, Chushigandru fighters had started ambushing Chinese convoys and so forth, and the Kashag/Dalai Lama seemed unwilling to do anything decisive about this. As a result, Mao and the Central Committee began to reconsider their Tibet Policy and contemplate whether it had now become necessary to shift toward their secondary or "last resort" policy, that is, to use the PLA to put down the rebels in Tibet and implement reforms forcibly. At this time we see Mao beginning to make comments about this, rationalizing that if this came to pass, the failure of the gradualist policy in Tibet would be something positive, not negative, because it would bring democratic reforms more quickly. This was the win-win aspect of Mao's Tibet Policy discussed in chapter 2; that is, if Tibetans rejected the gradualist approach and rebelled, force would be used, but that would still be a win for China. On the other hand, in late 1958, while shifting to a military solution was raised, nothing was decided, so for the time being the Dalai Lama's government remained and reforms were not implemented.

---

[9] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.

[10] Dalai Lama 1990, 119.

[11] Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 20 December 1958, 82.

Mao's first mention that the military option may be necessary in Tibet occurred in a brief comment made on 24 June 1958 with reference to a report about putting down the Qinghai rebellion that was written by the Qinghai Party Committee.[12] In this, after giving the standard rationalization that it was good that there had been a rebellion in Qinghai since it meant reforms will come sooner, he mentioned that in Tibet, it would be good to make preparations *in case* a rebellion occurred there. Mao said,

> It is extremely favorable to us that the reactionaries in Qinghai started the rebellion, since the opportunity of the working people's liberation is coming. The policy of the Provincial Party Committee of Qinghai is entirely right. In Tibet, you should make preparations *in case* a possible full-scale rebellion occurs there (Ch. xizang yao zhunbei duifu nali de keneng de quanju panluan). The more chaotic the situation is, the better. If the Tibetan reactionaries dare to start a full-scale rebellion, the working people there would be liberated even earlier; there is no doubt of that.[13]

Nevertheless, as will be seen in the following documents, at this time, Beijing continued to order the PLA to concentrate on defensive preparations and only go on the offense in certain limited situations. Important instructions on the use of the PLA in Tibet were sent to the TWC on 10 September and 11 October 1958.

---

[12] This was an 18 June 1958 report from the Qinghai Party Committee to the Central Committee, Central Military Committee, the Lanzhou Military Headquarters, Party committees of all districts and counties in Qinghai, the TWC branch of Chaidamu, and the Party Committee of Xining.

[13] "Instructions on the Report from the Party Committee of Qinghai Province Regarding Putting Down Rebellions, 24 June 1958," in Zhongguo zangxue yanjiu zhongxin keyan chu zhuban 1993, 34 (emphasis added).

The 10 September cable from the Central Committee said, "Be very cautious when it comes to the question of using the PLA to defeat the rebellion's armed forces. Only do it when the rebellion forces are directly threatening our troops and the main transportation routes. Only when you are sure to win should force be used. If we cannot fight good battles, it is better not to fight at all. Please pay careful attention to this issue."[14] And a month later, on 11 October, the Central Committee sent further instructions to the TWC titled, "On a few Tibetan Questions." These instructions for the first time made a major distinction between *localized revolts* and *full-scale revolts* and specified that only when local revolts become full-scale revolts should the PLA go on the offensive against the rebels. It also instructed that it is possible that there will only be local revolts *for a long time.* Nothing was imminent. The 11 October instructions said,

> We have received the telegram of August 27, the instructions about putting down the armed rebellion, and the telegram of September 6, which was a reply to the TWC branch office in Chamdo regarding the situation in the Chamdo area.
>
> The Central Committee basically agrees with the TWC's opinions regarding the present situation in Tibet and the Chamdo area, and with respect to the measures taken in handling the situation, we also have the following opinions:
>
> 1. According to the situation in Tibet and in the Chamdo area, *there exists the possibility for the local rebellions (Ch. jubuxing panluan) to develop into a full-scale rebellion* (Ch. *quanmianxing panluan*). [On the other hand,] there is also the possibility that *for quite a long period of time to come,* there will only be local rebellions rather than a full-scale rebellion. We should be cognizant of both of these as possibilities. But no matter which direction the situation is going to develop into, we should be fully prepared both politically and militarily. Thus, when the local rebellions develop into full-scale rebellions, *we can firmly put down the rebellions and thoroughly liberate the working people in Tibet. If the reactionaries in Tibet launch a full-scale rebellion in the Chamdo area, we can first put down the rebellions in this area and then carry out the full-scale reforms (Ch. quanmianxing gaige).*
>
> 2. *However, under the present circumstances, where rebellions are only occurring in certain local areas,* either in Tibet or in Chamdo, when it comes to the issue of using our armed forces to put down the rebels' armed forces, you should act according to the Central Committee's instructions of 10 September that said, "Attack the armed rebels only when they are directly threatening our troops and the main transportation routes and when we are sure that we can win." Under the present circumstances, if we follow such a military policy, it will be easier for us to take the initiative, to strengthen our present position, and to eventually disable (Ch. xiaomie) the enemy. Never carry out the idea that "no matter where rebellion takes place, we will directly send troops there to quell the rebellion" without getting a clear idea about the local situation, conditions, and the probability for achieving a victory.

---

[14] Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 10 September 1958, 79.

> 3. *As to the question of reforms, if there is no full-scale rebellion in Tibet or in Chamdo, we will not change our policy of not carrying out reform for six years.* We should *not* utilize a policy of "implementing reforms wherever there is a small-scale rebellion," because this will not be helpful for the overall situation. The nature of the reactionaries in Tibet and in Chamdo will become exposed sooner or later. Let them do what they want to do and let their nature be exposed by themselves. If this is done, it will be easier for us to solve the problem thoroughly. It will not work [for us] if we pay attention to trivial matters. [Therefore], *The TWC should immediately stop carrying out your instructions to conduct reforms in the Ningjing [Markham] area in Chamdo, because there are only local rebellions in Chamdo, and also, we do not have enough military forces. . . .*
>
> Please discuss all our above opinions and carry them out. Comrade Zhang Guohua came to Beijing recently and the Central Committee discussed issues regarding the work in Tibet. Beside our opinions that are included in this telegram, there is other advice that Comrade Deng Shaodong [the Tibet PLA's Vice Commander] will convey to the TWC.
>
> *Central Committee*
> *October 11, 1958*[15]

A corollary of this policy of not letting the PLA go on the offense to attack the Khamba rebels was the heavy emphasis on building up defensive positions in Lhasa (and other Chinese sites). A number of Chinese sources commented on some of the improvements in fortifications and defensive capabilities, one of which was to bolster defense capabilities by sending armored vehicles to Lhasa:

> In order to strengthen the PLA troops stationed in Tibet, the People's Liberation Army's General Staff Department [Ch. zong canmoubu] decided to dispatch twenty-eight armored vehicles to Tibet in the last ten days of July 1958. [Among these,] thirteen were reorganized as an armored company and stationed at the Damshung Airport, and the rest of them were reorganized as an armored company of the guard battalion of the Tibet Military Headquarters stationed in Lhasa.[16]

Similarly, a detailed plan was prepared to organize the office workers into militia units who would receive arms and training. The Party Chronicle noted the establishment of these formal militia units on 8 November 1958,

> November 8:
>
> The Militia Regiment [Ch. minbing tuan] of the government organizations in Lhasa was formally established in case of a possible rebellion and in order to do self-defense. Under the leadership of the TWC, the people in the government

---

15. DPRC, "Central Committee's Instruction on a Few Tibetan Questions," 11 October 1958 (emphasis added).

16. Zongcanmoubu zhuangjiabing bianjibu 1990, 227. Damshung was the first Lhasa airport. It is located about ninety-seven miles north of Lhasa, adjacent to the Qinghai-Tibet national highway.

> organizations in Lhasa established the Militia Regiment. Every office also established militia platoons or militia companies. In cities such as Chamdo, Shigatse, Gyantse, Tsetang, and Nakchu, et cetera, militia battalions and companies were formed one after another. These units adopted the "strict-relaxed policy" [Ch. neijin waisong]—be very strict internally, but give the appearance to the outside of being relaxed. In this way they could, on the one hand, build strong defensive fortifications and conduct military training, while on the other hand, still work as usual.[17]

Several Chinese soldiers have provided accounts of aspects of these preparations. Wang Guozhen, a PLA officer in the 308th Artillery Regiment, for example, recalled his company's preparations,

> In March 1958, I was the commander of the third company of the 308th artillery regiment.
>
> In 1957 and 1958, the intention of the Tibetan elite's reactionary group to launch a full-scale rebellion was known to everyone. In order to educate and save them as much as possible, we were ordered to follow the policy of forbearing and giving in. However, the rebels just thought that it was easy to bully and provoke us arbitrarily. [So their provocations] became more and more [rampant] day by day. Sometimes they even resorted to force.
>
> In order to obey the policies of the Central Committee, when we faced the rebels' rampant arrogance, we tolerated them over and over again, and *asked all of our people to try to avoid leaving the barracks.* The soldiers were all fed up with these acts and waited for the day to come when we could severely punish the rebels.
>
> Since the new site of our barracks was a vacant area [in Trip], initially our main task was to build barracks. During the day, we built up the barracks and during our spare time we carried out large training exercises. Almost every evening we were called out for an emergency drill [as if we were being attacked] or we practiced different techniques. The troops were very tired and exhausted. Every night, the soldier's military uniforms were drenched in sweat. However, morale went higher and higher. In less than one year, we had not only completed the barracks, but also built the artillery positions, selected the targets, measured the distances [to the targets], prepared the data [Ch. zhuyuan], divided up the target areas, and stored ammunition, grain, and medicines. In order to prevent the enemies from cutting off our water source, we made a trench to the Lhasa River.
>
> In order to be extremely accurate [in our targeting], the regimental commander took those of us who ranked above the company level to Lhasa to inspect and measure the terrain many times. Each time that we reached a place that was a target, the driver would pretend the car was broken and we got out to "repair" it. We took the opportunity when we got out to inspect the target. So all the places within our shooting range . . . were accurately measured by us. For all the places where the enemies frequented, we had collected the relevant data. The commanders of the regiment

---

[17] Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 8 November 1958, 80.

> knew that our regiment would play a key role in the battle, so they paid special attention to our work.[18]

Another PLA officer, Huang Shaoyang, was in a transportation division. He explained how one of the major plans for defending the Military Headquarters complex was to construct fortifications and underground bunkers with a network of tunnels that would connect all the building and storerooms. However, as anyone who has been to Lhasa knows, there are no trees there, so the Chinese had to import the lumber to construct these by truck all the way from Kongpo in southwestern Tibet. Transporting the lumber was extremely dangerous, because traffic on the Sichuan-Lhasa highway had sometimes been ambushed by Chushigandru units, so only large motor convoys were safe. Huang Shaoyong explained this in his recollection of his own trip to get timber in early 1959,

> To do this [building fortifications] we needed wood from Nixi in the east. So in January 1959, the [Tibet] Military Headquarters ordered the trucks of our regiment, together with over one hundred trucks from the local government, to go to Nixi to get timber. It was in the midst of the winter, and it was so cold that many parts of the road had become icy. In addition, the rebels were rather active along this route. They had destroyed bridges and road repair stations (Ch. daoban) along the highway. Our troops occupied only four army stations (Ch. bingzhan) . . . so our task was very difficult and we were facing lots of pressure.
>
> We were led by our regimental commander Wang Hongying. Almost six hundred trucks from our regiment started out together with trucks from the local government. We had all three machine guns of each of the companies set up on top of the trucks. All the co-drivers stood on the trucks carrying their guns. They carefully watched all around and were preparing to fight back immediately whenever we were attacked. We also took two mortars from our regiment with us in order to strengthen our firepower. Two company commanders who had rich battle experience . . . led the first truck and the last truck to escort the entire convoy. This was the largest convoy in Tibetan history. . . . Just after we passed Sumdo, the sixth company saw some rebels, but as soon as the enemy saw that the situation was unfavorable, they fled immediately, even before we reached them. So, reinforced by the Military Headquarters, we traveled at a speed two or three times faster than usual and managed to carry several thousand cubic meters of timber back to Lhasa. With this, . . . we quickly finished building all kinds of fortifications for the organizations of the Military Headquarters and the local government.[19] We also stored sufficient fuel for the battle.[20]

---

18. Wang Guozhen 1989, 38–45.
19. "Local government" here probably refers to the PCTAR.
20. Huang 1989, 46–54.

Similarly, a Chinese post office worker recalled some of his office's activities,

> During 1958, Han Chinese were often verbally abused or physically assaulted on the street, and following a directive from higher authorities, the Lhasa Post Office organized its staff into a militia and appointed Wang as its political officer. The militia set about organizing military training. . . . The militia's orders were that if the insurgents attacked, each unit's militia should fight separately at their own positions and try to defend themselves. The Postal Bureau immediately started constructing fortifications and collected a six-month supply of food, as well as fuel, arms, and ammunition. A transmitting station was set up well away from the main Post Office to ensure safe and clear communications. The Tibet Military Area Command sent a squad to defend the transmitting station.[21]

Further understanding of how the TWC viewed the situation in Tibet at this time can be seen from a speech the Acting First Secretary Tan Guansan gave to his cadres on 23 December 1958. This speech is interesting, because even *after* the 25 October attack on Tsetang and the devastating ambushes of a Chinese truck convoy and its relief troops near Gonggar in Lhoka on 18–19 December, it instructs cadres to use the coming New Year's holiday to develop good relations with Tibetans.

Tan Guansan's speech started with the standard criticism of the Kashag and its policy toward the Khambas, but then shifted and told the cadres to try win over Tibetans during the upcoming New Year's holiday season, which was to take place in February 1959.

> The reactionaries in Tibet have been plotting for a rebellion since a long time ago. When the reactionaries in the Tibetan areas of the neighboring provinces escaped into Tibet after their rebellions failed, and also when the spies of the U.S. government and the GMD government helped to start the rebellion, the reactionaries within the Kashag took a supporting position toward the rebels. As a result, the entire Kashag actually supports the rebels' rebellious activities in secret (the reactionaries both within and outside of the Kashag share the same class interests and class positions, which is the result of their class nature). Under these circumstances, our conflicts and struggles with the Kashag, and especially with the rightists, have become rather intense. They try to force us to give them more concessions on political issues in order to postpone democratic reforms for a long time or even to abolish it completely with the aim of maintaining their right of feudal exploitation and their ruling interests. Therefore, in the recent year, we have been doing a series of class struggles with the Kashag centering on the issue of quelling the rebellion. These are extremely harsh class struggles. In this class struggle, the Kashag actually sides with the rebels. They protect and support the rebels. *And they also emphasize that the local government*

---

[21] Pang Li and Zhang Yunxing, "Eyewitness to the 1959 Lhasa Rebellion," China Internet Information Center, March 9, 2009, http://www.china.org.cn/china/tibet_democratic_reform/content_17411918.htm.

> *doesn't have the power to quell the rebellion, attempting to attribute the cause of rebellion to the Central Committee and therefore to shirk their responsibility.* However, their plot has failed. The TWC definitely pointed out that the Kashag should be fully responsible for the occurrence of the rebellion in Tibet, and thus *the Kashag should also take full responsibility for quelling the rebellion. . . .*
>
> According to the situation mentioned above . . . all the comrades of our CCP and PLA organizations must actively take action: we should try to do united front work among the upper-class people, to make friends with more people, and to endeavor to make divisions within the upper-class members of ruling group.
>
> From the perspective of our future work, we also must mobilize all the comrades of the CCP and PLA to unify our steps, unify our ideas, unify our language, and do the united front work in a planned and organized way. Therefore, on the eve of the New Year, all our organizations should actively and widely launch united front work by means of celebrating the New Year. For those [Tibetan] friends with whom we have been out of touch for some time, we should re-contact them; for those people with whom we should establish new relationships, we should do it. By means of these activities in celebrating the New Year, we should gradually strengthen our relationships with them as part of our routine work. . . . Under any circumstances, when we talk with our friends, *we should definitely express our position that we respect the Dalai Lama; that it is right for Dalai Lama to order the Kashag to quell the rebellion; and that if the Kashag fails to carry out these instructions given by the Dalai Lama, it is because the officials of the Kashag are failing to take their responsibility. . . .*
>
> In this period, we should try to make as many friends as possible. Don't rush to ask them for information. Rather, try to educate them on issues of policy, information, and politics. In particular, with regard to the centrists, we should especially make efforts to win them over and to educate them. According to the situation now, the centrists have not made their decision to take sides. Therefore, both the rightists and we are endeavoring to win them over. If we can persuade the centrists to side with us, it would be highly helpful for isolating and alienating the rightists as well as for strengthening the leftists. Under the current circumstances, the number of the leftists is small and they don't have much power. Fiercely attacked by the rightists, the leftists can't see a clear direction for the future, so they feel somewhat confused and lack high morale. The rightists have already taken all kinds of measures to threaten and strike them. In this situation, we must firmly support and protect them. Thus, when visiting and talking with the leftists, we can have a deeper discussion with them. On some issues, we can tell them our final position (Ch. tantou), give them our direction, encourage them about the struggle, and improve their confidence.[22]

Two weeks later, on 6 January, another set of instructions from Beijing arrived in Lhasa that contained an especially strong reassertion of the gradualist strategy in that it referred the TWC's cadres back to the Great Contraction instructions of

---

22. DPRC, "A Speech on the Kashag's Political Attitude and Our Countermeasures" Given by Tan Guansan on the afternoons of 23–24 December 1958 (emphasis added).

14 May 1957. It also continued to instruct the TWC that it was not permitted for them to take actions regarding dealing with Tibetans without first consulting the Central Committee.

> [To the] TWC:
>
> . . . The Central Committee believes that the TWC cadre's conference was successful, and we basically agree with the two work evaluation reports of the TWC.[23] Generally speaking, during the last few years, the TWC has carried out the policy of the Central Committee, and that is why various aspects of our work in Tibet have achieved big successes.
>
> Regarding work in the future, the requirement that you should do the *five dos* and the *four don'ts,* as was specified in the Central Committee's 14 May 1957 "Instructions on the TWC's Work Plan in the Future," *is still suitable for the actual situation in Tibet.*[24] The TWC can make specific work arrangements according to those instructions that were issued by Central Committee as well as the Central Committee's "Instructions on several issues regarding current work in Tibet" that was issued on October 11, 1958 [presented above]. *It is not necessary to make a new plan and design a new policy for our work in the next four years [the rest of the current 5-year plan].*
>
> Due to the complexity of the situation in Tibet, when dealing with policy issues and important questions, the TWC should still specially follow the principle of centralized leadership "[to] monopolize all powers" [Ch. daquan dulan] [i.e., the Central Committee is in charge of all policy and work decisions and must be contacted for approval].[25]
>
> *Central Committee*
> *January 6, 1959*[26]

The above cited documents reveal that even as late as 6 January, Beijing was not planning to forcibly implement democratic reforms, despite the fact that the Chinese position in Tibet was secure, and had been so for several years. The two national highways to China had been completed in December 1954, an airport had been opened in Lhasa in 1956, and hundreds of miles of others roads within Tibet had been built, including one to Yadong on the Sikkim-Indian border and one from Xinjiang to far western Tibet. Consequently, moving supplies, troops, and munitions was no longer a major problem. In addition, a communications system had been put in place between Tibet and Beijing, and, as was mentioned previously, during the Great Contraction Beijing actually felt confident enough to make a sizable reduction in the total number of troops and cadres in Tibet.

---

[23] These reports are not available.

[24] In Chinese: dui xizanggongwei guanyu jinhou gongzuo jueding de pishi. This seminal document was cited in full in chapter 2.

[25] This meant that the TWC had to ask permission from the Central Committee before doing things dealing with Tibetans.

[26] DPRC, "Central Committee's Reply to TWC's Work in the Future," 6 January 1959 (emphasis added).

Mao's Tibet policy, therefore, was not being continued because of China's weakness in Tibet, as much of the literature claims, but because, as discussed previously, Mao believed that the national interests of the PRC would be enhanced if Tibet and Tibetans could be gradually and voluntarily won over. Thus, despite Mao's hardline leftist campaigns in China at this time (such as the Anti-Rightest Campaign and the Great Leap Forward), Mao perceived Tibet as historically and strategically different from the rest of China and was pursuing a moderate policy there that reflected these differences. Even just a few months before the Lhasa uprising, Mao and the Central Committee told the TWC that the PLA should not be used to implement reforms and end the old system unless a *widespread rebellion* occurred, but at the time of the instructions of 6 January 1959, *Mao and the Central Committee did not consider that such a situation had been reached or that it was inevitable that it would be reached.* Surprisingly, therefore, Mao, at least with respect to Tibet, seeming perfectly able to 'pat his head and rub his stomach' at the same time.

This position, however, changed a few weeks later. The catalyst for this apparently were a series of reports about more ambushes and attacks like the one from the Tibet Military Headquarters to the headquarters of the General Staff [in Beijing] that was sent on 14 January regarding the attacks of the rebels in Pembar, Tramo, Xieke, and Lhoka. That telegram said that "the rebels gathered in these places, ambushed our troops, surrounded our small teams in stations, and tried to cut off key transportation routes. Our small teams were forced to fight back. Due to the current rebel activities, the headquarters ordered all small stations to be very careful and alert."[27] It appears that these attacks persuaded Mao that the insurgency was now spreading and escalating in different parts of Tibet outside of Lhoka, so it was time to consider shifting to his "last-resort" policy. We see this shift appear in late January, when Mao made several very terse statements about the Khamba attacks. The first comment was written by Mao on 22 January as an addition to a document called "Deng Xiaoping's Instructions about Sending Young People to Go to Tibet to Do Agricultural Work." It reveals his conclusion that at some point in the coming years, China would need to use the PLA offensively.

> TO: Lui [Shaoqi], Xiaoping, [Peng] Dehuai, [Huang] Kecheng,
> and to [Yang] Shangkun's General Office of the Central Committee,
> please take care of it. I added a paragraph at the end.
>
> The next *few years* in Tibet will be a period of time when our enemy and us both will try to win over the masses, and both will try to improve military powers. After

---

[27] This was contained in a footnote to the document "Instructions regarding a telegram from the Tibetan Military Headquarters, 23 January" from Mao Zedong. In Jianguo yilai mao zedong wengao 1993, 8: 10–11.

> a few years, three or four years, five or six years, even seven or eight years, *a big battle will definitely come, so [via that] we can solve the problems thoroughly.* In the past, the rulers of Tibet only had an army with weak military power. Now they have armed forces of ten thousand with high morale.[28] This is a serious problem for us. However, it does not mean it is a bad thing. On the contrary, it is a good thing, since there is the possibility for us to solve the problem militarily. However we must do the following: (1) we must win over the masses *during the next few years,* and isolate the reactionaries, and (2) train our army to be strong fighters. These two things should be done during our struggle with armed rebels.
>
> *Mao Zedong, 22 January 1959*[29]

A second brief comment was written by Mao to be added to a document titled, "Instructions regarding a Telegram from the Tibetan Military Headquarters." It said,

> These sort of battles [with rebels] have a lot of benefits: they can help us mobilize the masses as well as give our troops training. It would be good for us if we fight (these sort of battles) often: if we can fight (this sort of battle) for five to six years or seven to eight years and disable a large number of enemies, the condition for launching the reforms would be ripe.
>
> *Mao Zedong, 22 January*[30]

This shift in assessment and tactics was conveyed even more clearly two days later, when the Central Committee sent instructions to Lhasa that incorporated Mao's 22 January comments.

> January 24:
>
> The Central Committee informed the work committee [TWC] that the armed uprisings/rebellion *have expanded to the next level.* The telegram said, *the uprisings will continue to expand unless we have a one-time decisive battle.* Then, and only then, will the problem be resolved thoroughly. The telegram went on to say [quoting Mao without mentioning his name], "In Tibet at present and within the next few years, there will be a struggle between us and the enemy focused on the work of winning over the masses and the ability to train people with guns. Therefore we must win over the masses to our side and isolate the reactionaries. Our army can, on the one hand, work to win over the masses and, on the other, fight the reactionaries."[31]

Taken together, the 22 January and 24 January communiqués reflect a major movement away from the instructions that were conveyed on 6 January. Mao and the Central Committee had now decided that the rebellion *had ris*en *to the next level* and so it was necessary to shift to implementing the military solution to destroy the revolt and put an end to the traditional society in Tibet—*but not immediately.*

---

[28] Mao must have been including the Khamba fighters in Tibet, since the regular Tibetan army had only about three thousand troops.

[29] Jianguo yilai mao zedong wengao 1993, 8: 10. The Central Committee issued these instructions on 24 January 1959.

[30] Jianguo yilai mao zedong wengao 1993, 8: 12.

[31] Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 24 January 1959, 82.

At about the same time, there was news of further Khamba attacks in Tibet.

> January 24, 1959:
>
> More than three hundred armed rebels led by the Dingqing (Tengchen) headsman, Jariban, attacked the Dingqing County Work Committee on the morning of the 24th.[32] They suddenly attacked and then retreated. Afterwards, they encircled us with more than three thousand rebels and cut off our water supply. Under fire from our air force and from our defensive troops that consisted of one company and some county cadres, we use anti-encircling techniques to seriously hurt the enemy and kill many of their men. After April 26th, the enemy began to escape and run away. This all lasted for about ninety days.
>
> January 24, 1959:
>
> Rebel elements attacked our convoy at Giamda. Cadres from our regiments and soldiers totaling about 20 men left Giamda in 2 separate trucks for Chamdo for get medical attention and attend meetings. When we reached the Xuejila Pass near a road repair station, we were suddenly attacked by armed rebels. Sixteen of our men were killed and we killed 5 of theirs.[33]
>
> January 25:
>
> Beginning on January 25, the armed rebels once again attacked us in Tsetang, and this time the fighting [the siege] lasted for 74 days. More than 2,000 rebels, headed by Jama Samphel, ferociously attacked the branch working committee and 2 defensive companies. Our 300 cadres and militia men fought back many times during 2 days of fierce fighting. Since their attacks failed, they pulled back and encircled us. . . .[34]

These incidents further hardened Beijing's new conclusions, and on 2 February, the Central Committee's assessment that the revolt had risen to the next level was made public when the Xinhua News Agency published an article saying that the armed rebellion in Tibet had developed into a full-scale rebellion. A few weeks later, Mao made two additional statements prioritizing the military option in the future.[35] The first was a comment made on 18 February regarding "the Brief Report of the Situation of the Armed Rebellion in Tibet."

---

[32] Tengchen is a region located in the northern part of Chamdo Prefecture.

[33] Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 24 January 1959, 82.

[34] Ibid., entries for 24 January and 25 January, 82–83.

[35] Footnote to "Comments on the Brief Report of the Situation of the Armed Rebellion in Tibet," in *Brief Report of the Situation*, vol. 16, edited and printed by the General Office of the CCP Central Committee on 14 February 1959. Mao's comment was in Jianguo yilai mao zedong wengao 1993, 8: 46.

> After Liu [Shaoqi], Zhou [Enlai], Chen Yi and [Deng] Xiaoping read it, please return it to Comrade Peng Dehuai
>
> The more chaotic the situation in Tibet, the better, for it can train our army, train the masses, and offer us sufficient reason for quelling the rebellion and launching the reform *in the future.*
>
> *Mao Zedong*
> *February 18th*
> *Printed based on (Mao's) manuscript.*[36]

The next day, 19 February, Mao added one sentence and revised another sentence regarding a report from the Headquarters of the General Staff that was issued on 27 December 1958 about putting down rebellions in Chengdu, Lanzhou, Kunming, and Tibet. That report had said,

> Since the end of 1955, large-scale rebellions occurred in minority regions in Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, Qinghai, and Tibet [Sichuan]. Based on the policy of the Central Committee that combined the tactics of politically winning over and militarily defeating the enemy, our troops fought for three years and so far have put down rebellions in most regions. Several issues need to be noticed: (1) the rebellions in Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu, and Qinghai were put down. [However,] *things in Tibet are very complex, and our troops should strictly obey the policies of the Central Committee regarding self-defense.* (2) Some rebels from other provinces escaped to Tibet and tried to fight with us for a long time. Our troops should cooperate with each other and leave no chance for the enemies [to succeed]. (3) All military headquarters should summarize the experiences and lessons they learned. (4) If there are problems of equipment, the military headquarters should please let us know.[37]

To this report, Mao *added the following sentence:*

> "This sort of quelling rebellions has lots of benefits. It can bring us three main benefits: training our troops, training the masses, and offering sufficient reason for thoroughly quelling the rebellion and launching the reforms in the future."

And *he revised a sentence to say:*

> "On the military aspects, we not only don't fear rebellion, but also even welcome this sort of rebellion. Yet we must make the preparations for quelling the rebellion *in a timely way.*"
>
> *Mao Zedong*
> *February 19, 1959*[38]

---

36. Footnote to "Comments on the Brief Report." Mao's comment was in Jianguo yilai mao zedong wengao 1993, 8: 47–48. The Central Committee issued these instructions on 24 January.

37. This quote from the 27 December report was cited in footnote 41 to Mao's 19 February comments in Jianguo yilai mao zedong wengao 1993, 8: 46.

38. Mao's comments (19 February 1959) and revisions on "the Report of the Situation about Quelling the Rebellion" by the Combat Department (Ch. zuozhanbu) of the General Staff Department, in Jianguo yilai mao zedong wengao 1993, 8: 46.

What is significant about this change in attitude is that Mao and the Central Committee were obviously in no rush to go on the offensive and implement reforms. Mao did not see an offensive attack by the PLA against the rebels as something imminent. Depending on how things developed, the final battle was still years away, and in the meantime, the cadres should continue to work hard to train the masses and train the army. And critically, until that time, the PLA should continue to follow the self-defense strategy. Consequently, the Tibetan government and the old society were to remain in place until such a time in the coming years when Mao concluded that conditions were right to use the PLA offensively. Thus, in day-to-day interactions, the Chinese side would continue to sustain the normal façade of cordial and cooperative relations with the Kashag and the Tibetan elite. Moreover, if the Dalai Lama/Kashag suddenly decided to seriously address the Khamba revolt, it is likely that Mao would still have been willing to reverse his decision.

While these issues were being discussed and evaluated by Mao and the Central Committee, a seemingly trivial event occurred at the start of February 1959 that set in motion forces that changed Tibetan history—a casual invitation to the Dalai Lama to see a new PLA song and dance troupe.

THE DALAI LAMA AND THE "SONG AND DANCE" SHOW

The issue involving the show began innocuously when two Chinese officials came to the Potala on the twenty-ninth of the Tibetan twelfth month (6 February 1959) to attend Gutor, an important Tibetan religious event.[39] Li Zuomin, a bilingual Chinese cadre who did most of the translating between the TWC and the Kashag and was also the Director of the United Front Office, explained,

> We went there that year as we had every year since we had come to Tibet. They [the Tibetan Government] would invite the leaders of the Tibet Work Committee, the Tibet Military Headquarters and the PCTAR to the Gutor Festival every year. We would go to demonstrate that we have good relations. We would first meet the Dalai Lama in private and then go and watch the religious dance (Tib. cham) which was held in the white building of the Potala. On the Gutor day in 1959, . . . Commander Deng Shaodong, who had been in Tibet for just three to four months, went together with Guo Xilan, the Secretary General of the Tibet Work Committee.[40]

---

[39] The Gutor ceremony's function was to clear away negative aspects from the present year in preparation for the new year. It took place at the south side of the Potala in the Deyangshar courtyard.

[40] Li Zuomin, interview, Beijing, 2011, H.0053.04.

During the course of their meeting with the Dalai Lama, the issue of a new song and dance show was raised, as the Dalai Lama explained,

> The annual Gutor Religious Dance was an event to which some Chinese officials used to come. At that time, a Chinese military officer came to see me upstairs. . . . I don't remember the name of the military officer, but he was a newcomer [in Tibet]. He said that they are building a new hall at the Military Headquarters and a theatrical troupe is coming, so it would be nice if we can show you [their show]. So I said that that would be good, that I would like to see it. Earlier, at the Jenselingga Palace in Norbulinga, there had been a show [performed] at the Bodyguard Regiment. I said that's alright.[41]

In another interview, the Dalai Lama added, "So at that time there were no suspicions."[42] And in his memoir, he repeated this.

> I received General Chiang Chin-wu [incorrect: it was Deng Shaodong], who came, as was his custom, with a New Year message. He also announced the arrival in Lhasa of a new dance troupe from China. Might I be interested to see them? I replied that I would be. He then said that they could perform anywhere, but since there was a proper stage with footlights at the Chinese military headquarters, it might be better if I could go there. This made sense as there were no such facilities at the Norbulingka, so I indicated that I would be happy to do so.[43]

The Dalai Lama, therefore, *clearly saw no problem and had no suspicions about going to see the show at the Chinese Military Headquarters*. However, no actual date for the visit had been decided.

This time of the year was dominated by the New Year celebrations and the Great Mönlam Prayer Festival. New Year's Day in 1959 was 8 February, and the Mönlam Prayer Festival took place from the fourth to the fifteenth of the first Tibetan lunar month (11–23 February). It brought roughly twenty thousand monks to the Tsuglagang Temple in the center of Lhasa to engage in joint chanting for the benefit of humankind. It also brought thousands of pilgrims from within Tibet and especially from Kham and Amdo. In 1959, the Mönlam festival was especially significant, since the Dalai Lama would be staying at the Tsuglagang because he was going to be taking his final geshe exam (Tib. thragor) on the thirteenth of the first lunar month. Otherwise, the Dalai Lama did not normally reside in the Tsuglagang during the Mönlam.

The issue of the show reemerged a few days after the Mönlam started, when two Chinese officials came to the Tsuglagang to ask the Dalai Lama if he could

---

41. Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1994, H.0017.03.
42. Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.
43. Dalai Lama 1990, 130.

set a date to come to see the show. The Dalai Lama recalled this visit in his autobiography,

> Two junior Chinese officials came unannounced to renew General Chian Chin-wu's [*sic*; Deng Shaodong's] invitation to see the dance troupe. They also asked for a date when I could attend. I replied that I would be pleased to go after the [Mönlam] festival was over. But for the moment I have rather more important things to think about, namely my final examination, which was soon to take place.[44]

When the Mönlam ended, several Chinese officials again came asking the Dalai Lama to set a date for the visit, but again they were told that the Dalai Lama was very busy, this time with his upcoming "great procession" (Tib. chibgyur chemmo), in which he would travel from the Tsuglagang to the summer palace in Norbulinga in a palanquin accompanied by a procession of officials and others on horseback. The Chinese, therefore, were told they would have to wait for a date until after the procession, which took place on the twenty-fifth of the Tibetan first month (4 March). After that, the Dalai Lama would be in residence in Norbulinga.[45] A few days later, probably on the twenty-eighth of the first Tibetan month [8 March], Li Zuomin contacted the Dalai Lama via the Jigyab Khembo Gadrang, and this time secured the date of 3 P.M. on the tenth [of March].[46] The Dalai Lama wrote that the date for the visit was finalized through a phone call, but he said the call took place on the seventh of March,

> It was two days later, on the seventh of March, that I had another message from the general. His interpreter, whose name was Li [Zuomin], telephoned to my Jigyab khembo asking for a definite date when I could attend the performance in the Chinese camp. The Jigyab khembo consulted me, and then he told Li that the 10th of March would be convenient.[47]

Consequently, as the seventh (or eighth) of March came to a close, neither the Dalai Lama nor Gadrang saw any problem with his going to attend the show on the tenth. All that was left to be finalized were the actual logistic arrangements for the visit.

In traditional Tibetan society, the Dalai Lama did not travel much in the city, so whenever he left his palace, his travel was a major event and involved an elaborate procession with a palanquin. However, after the start of the PCTAR in 1966, since the Dalai Lama was the director of the PCTAR, he had to attend meetings and ceremonies often at the PCTAR offices, so on these occasions, there was no grand procession and he usually went by car. Normally at these times he had an entourage of twenty to twenty-five armed Bodyguard Regiment soldiers who accompanied him (but waited outside the PCTAR building).

---

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., 131.

[46] Zhonggong xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui 1990, entry for 1 March 1959. Also, Dalai Lama 1990, 131.

[47] Dalai Lama 1977, 165–66.

Making the actual arrangements for the visit to the show took place on the morning of 9 March, when the Chinese contacted Taklha, the commander of the Dalai Lama's Bodyguard Regiment and the official in charge of his security. This visit was not a major concern and Taklha had not even been told about it by Gadrang or Phala or the Dalai Lama. He recalled that he only learned about the scheduled visit when two Chinese officers came to his residence in a jeep early that morning at 6 A.M. to ask him to come at once with them to their Military Headquarters to discuss the arrangements for the visit. He hadn't washed yet, so he told them to wait until he finished, and then he ate a quick breakfast before he went together with them.[48]

When he got there, Deputy Commander Deng was waiting for him and told him that tomorrow the Dalai Lama was going to come to visit the Military Headquarters, so they had called him to discuss the arrangements. Taklha was surprised to learn this, but assumed this visit would follow the standard procedure for the Dalai Lama's visits to the PCTAR. He was wrong, as the Chinese told him that bringing armed troops into the compound of their military headquarters was not permitted.[49] The Chinese considered this visit fundamentally different from those the Dalai Lama made to the PCTAR meetings, because it was inside the main PLA Army Headquarters. Consequently, they wanted the Dalai Lama to bring as few people as possible, and especially to bring *no weapons at all.* They assured Taklha that while inside, the Dalai Lama's safety would be no problem since it was the responsibility of the PLA to guarantee this.[50] Taklha tried to explain to his counterparts that Tibetans would perceive this very negatively, because the custom was that wherever the Dalai Lama went, he was accompanied by twenty-five Bodyguard Regiment troops. Consequently, he told them that they must be allowed to accompany him when he comes to the Military Headquarters. Taklha said the Chinese kept insisting, although they finally yielded a little and told him,

> You can take two soldiers [inside], but they can't carry weapons. So then I said [again], "It is not okay to arrange things like this, and I can't make a decision about this. *I will have to report this to my superiors officials like Phala and Gadrang.* . . . The Chinese [had] also told me that the other high officials, like the kalöns . . . can take only one servant and the kalöns can not carry guns [pistols inside their robes].[51]

---

[48] Taklha, Phüntso Tashi, interview, England, 1997, H.0037.05; Stag Lha (Taklha) 1995, 255–56.

[49] Stag Lha (Taklha) 1995, 255–56; Taklha, Phüntso Tashi, interview, England, 1997, H.0037.05.

[50] Stag Lha (Taklha) 1995, 255–56. The Chinese position that this was a widespread norm is generally correct, but internationally, what, if any, weapons a leader's bodyguards can carry in other countries can be negotiated.

[51] Taklha, interview, England, 1997, H.0037.05; Stag Lha (Taklha) 1995, 258–59 (emphasis added).

Actually both sides were being unrealistic. The twenty-five Tibet armed troops obviously would not have posed any threat to the Chinese military headquarters, nor could they have defended the Dalai Lama against the whole main Chinese garrison.

Nevertheless, when Taklha returned from the Chinese headquarters, he reported to Phala, and the two of them went to discuss this situation with Gadrang. Gadrang thought these restrictions were a very serious issue, and decided that they should all go to report this to the Dalai Lama.[52]

The Dalai Lama remembered that the three of them came to see him and told him, "There is great danger [doing it this way], and we can't predict what the Chinese will do . . . so it is better not to go."[53] The Dalai Lama, however, was not swayed. He still saw no problem with the visit and told them, "It doesn't matter. You don't need to feel suspicious about that."[54]

In another interview, Taklha recalled that the Dalai Lama responded, "There isn't any danger at all. We are definitely going [Tib. drogyang] tomorrow."[55] And in his book, Taklha wrote that the Dalai Lama thought for a moment and then told the three of them, "Something bad like that won't happen, so it is not okay if we do not go tomorrow." After this, the three officials elaborated further on why it was too dangerous to go, but the Dalai Lama again said, "There is no reason to have doubts like that. If we go, no harm will come." And then he told Gadrang to continue to make arrangements for tomorrow's trip to the Military Headquarters.[56]

The Dalai Lama commented clearly on his decisive decision in an interview,

> At first Chemmo and Gadrang came together. At that time I was staying at the New Palace (in Norbulingka). That was on the thirtieth [9 March]. They came and said that there was great danger and that they can't predict what the Chinese will do. Depön [Taklha] was even told that the Bodyguard soldiers cannot come, and if they do, then they must be unarmed. So there is a great danger and it is better not to go. Now, I said, how can I do this? It has already been decided that I was to go a long time ago, so how can I say today that I can't go when I already said some time back that I would go? So it was impossible to refuse. Without a great excuse, how could I say that? It would border on an open breach of relations. So I said that this would be very difficult to do, so there is no other way. So this was my position *and it is what I was actually thinking.*[57]

The Dalai Lama's feeling that canceling at this late date would "border on an open breach of relations," reveals that the Dalai Lama still was thinking that it was important for him to maintain cordial relations with the Chinese in order to continue the status quo. Preserving his government's internal autonomy and the continued existence of the entire Tibetan socioreligious system required maintaining good relations with the Chinese. That was why he had returned to Lhasa from India in 1957, so now he insisted on going, despite the "unusual" Chinese rules for the visit.

---

[52] Taklha, interview, England, 1997, H.0037.05.

[53] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Taklha, interview, England, 1997, H.0037.05.

[56] Stag lha (Taklha) 1995, 260.

[57] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.

This decision was one of the turning points in modern Tibetan history. Had the Dalai Lama accepted his advisors' strong advice, as he usually did, and decided not to go, there would have been no 10 March demonstration, no Lhasa uprising, and Tibetan history would have followed a very different trajectory. As will be seen in a later chapter, the Dalai Lama himself understood that.[58]

However, even after the Dalai Lama decided to go, that would not have caused the 10 March uprising had not some of his officials *deliberately ignored his wishes and covertly incited the Lhasa populace to come to Norbulinga the next day* to demonstrate to prevent him from going to the Chinese Military Headquarters.

FOMENTING A DEMONSTRATION AT NORBULINGA

As the issue of Chushigandru worsened, many Tibetans officials in Lhasa were deeply concerned and suspicious about Chinese intentions toward the Dalai Lama. They felt that the attitudes of the Chinese had worsened and that they had started showing less respect for the Dalai Lama. Drakten, a monk official, conveyed this perception in an interview,

> At first, when the main commanders like Zhang Jingwu came [to see the Dalai Lama], they used to request visits in the traditional way by asking for an audience for the day after tomorrow or for three days from now, and [just] one or two companions with interpreters used to come. Later, in 1958, anybody who came from China used to say that they wanted an audience immediately, and five to six people used to come. Some women were also brought along. And when they were waiting [for the audience], they immediately started smoking and they also put their feet up and leaned backwards. And since the snacks were good, they even took some away. They ate so much and just sat relaxing and chatting. . . . And in the [Dalai Lama's] meeting room His Holiness was all alone with just attendants who were all old, and there were only two guards below. So once inside, when the door was closed, all one could hear was the call bell and not any voices. So there were five to six Chinese in there and His Holiness was all alone, so if they wanted to do something, it was very easy. . . . This was in 1958. It was very close [to the uprising].[59]

---

[58] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1994, H.0019.04.

[59] Drakten, interview, India, 1993, H.0001.11.

In addition, the substantial enhancement of the Chinese military defenses, as discussed in this and the last chapter, also had a major negative impact on the thinking of Tibetans in Lhasa. The Chinese, it should be said, felt they needed these enhancements because they were worried about a Tibetan/Khamba attack. They were in the midst of a rebellion where the rebel headquarters were relatively close by in Lhoka, and there were also many armed and angry Khamba refugees still in Lhasa, plus, of course, there were two thousand to three thousand Tibetan army troops on duty who could easily join in. In addition, they were correct in believing that the Tibet government was secretly aiding Chushigandru, albeit it was not the Kashag as they thought but Phala. For example, as mentioned previously, the famous raid of Radru Ngawang at Gonggar occurred because Phala, through officers in the Trapchi regiment, secretly told Radru Ngawang to take his men and go at once to Lhoka to be in place to ambush the Chinese supply convoy.

On the other hand, since Tibetans in Lhasa had absolutely no plans to attack the Chinese, they saw this military enhancement program as evidence that the Chinese were preparing to attack them. These military improvements became a focal issue for the Tibetan elite during the Mönlam Prayer Festival, because the Dalai Lama would be residing in the Tsuglagang during part of the Mönlam, and two of the main Chinese administrative buildings, the former Sambo House and the Kyitöpa House, were located opposite the Tsuglagang and its Sungjöra courtyard. Consequently, the Chinese troops and militia stationed in those houses would be looking down into the Tsuglagang/Sungjöra with an unimpeded line of fire. The Dalai Lama also commented on this,

> So in the Sungjöra, on the morning of the Mönlam, I took my vows and there were some prayers to be said.[60] At that time there was great fear. In front of the Sungjöra, there was the Sambo House, which was at that time some sort of Chinese Bank. . . . At that time the Chinese had already put bunkers (Tib. dzingra) on the windows, and on top of the houses and everywhere the Chinese had put battlements. So it was said that this is very dangerous and there were discussions as to whether or not [I should] go to the Sungjöra.[61]

This was also the logag or astrologically inauspicious year of the Dalai Lama, when he would be most open to personal misfortune. This year comes every twelve years (for example, when an individual is twelve, twenty-four, and thirty-six years of age). Many officials on the Tibetan side, therefore, feared a sneak attack by the Chinese. In fact, during the summer of 1958, when the Dalai Lama had to go outside his palace to visit the three monastic seats around Lhasa to take the first part of his geshe exams, Tibetan army troops were deployed on the surrounding hills to defend him, as he recalled,

---

[60] He was referring to his gelong vows.

[61] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.

> There was a lot of tension at that time. For example, in 1958 when I . . . took my exam in the courtyard of Drepung (Monastery's) Tsogchen (main prayer assembly hall). . . . Nearby, there is a hillock . . . and on the west . . . there are more hills. On them, [Tibetan] soldiers were placed. It was said that the Chinese would come, and all were suspicious about that.
>
> Then from Drepung we went to Sera via the Pari Hill. On that hill too, soldiers were placed. Usually we don't have soldiers right next to the palanquin, but now we did. What we were telling the Chinese was that it is possible that some Khambas could come to make trouble. That's what we told the Chinese, [but] among ourselves, we were saying that the Chinese would come.[62]

There were also a number of incidents between Chinese and Tibetans that further fueled the volatile atmosphere. One well-known incident actually occurred during the Mönlam and involved the arrest of two Chinese on 14 February by the Tibetan army on suspicion of planning to assassinate the Dalai Lama. A tense situation ensued, as the Chinese demanded the Tibetan army release them and sent one of their senior cadres to discuss this with the Dalai Lama. In the end, the two were found not to be assassins and were released. However, it was in such an atmosphere, rift with suspicions, rumors, and anger, that news of the Dalai Lama's visit to the Chinese Military Headquarters was announced to monk officials on the morning of 9 March. Lord Chamberlain Phala had been notified by Gadrang that the Dalai Lama would go to the Chinese Military Headquarters on the tenth, so he announced this at the Trungja Tea Ceremony on the ninth, when he announced the names of his two tsendrön (monk official aides) who would accompany the Dalai Lama to the show.[63]

After the Trungja ceremony, Yeshe Lhündrup, who was the Shukja Tsendrön,[64] brought a cushion out into the sun where his nephew, the monk official Drakten, said it seemed like he was writing some notes [in the Secretariat's record book (Tib. gagteb)].[65] While he was there, Tsendrön Barshi, who had not attended the Trungja that day, walked up to Yeshe Lhundrup and learned the news about the Dalai Lama's planned visit to the show the next day. He was alarmed by this and asked, has it really been confirmed that he is going? When Yeshe Lhundrup replied yes, . . . Barshi said, "Now, it is finished. . . . Tomorrow at this time everything will be finished." Yeshe didn't immediately understand, so asked Barshi what he meant by "everything will be finished." Barshi replied, "Tomorrow, they will invite him there and then they will pack him up [he used the verb that conveys putting away items in a box].[66] After this, they will send soldiers and trucks and put all of us in them, so by tomorrow night at this time, we will be in a Chinese prison." . . . Barshi says that when Yeshe asked, "What would be good to do?" he didn't give any answer, but he thought to himself the only way to stop that is to summon the 'people' (Tib. mimang) to come to Norbulinga to prostrate to stop him from going. It seemed to Barshi that the time had come to put into action a prophecy that Nechung, the State Oracle, had given him not long before.[67]

---

[62] Ibid.

[63] Tsendrön were fifth-rank monk officials who worked as aides to Phala in the Dalai Lama's Secretariat or Tsega. There were eight or more of these.

[64] The Shukja Tsendrön was the tsendrön in the Secretariat's Office who was on duty 24/7. When various people (Chinese, foreigners, others) came for audiences with the Dalai Lama, it was the Shukja Tsendrön who served them tea and snacks and answered when the Dalai Lama rang his two-sided call drum (Tib. chata). After the Trungja was recessed and the Dalai Lama returned to his room, the Shukja Tsendrön stayed like an attendant.

[65] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.02.

By late 1958, Barshi had become convinced, if not obsessed, with the idea that the Dalai Lama's life and freedom were in great danger, and, as was discussed in chapter 8, he played an active role in the National Assembly meeting that was convened to discuss "alleviating the anger of China and quelling the Khambas's revolt." He had argued forcefully against using Tibetan troops, but also felt that the Assembly's final resolution was too weak and that the Kashag would not take adequate measures to protect the Dalai Lama, since it was likely the Khamba problem was only going to get worse and worse and eventually the Chinese would strike. So on his own, he had called an ad hoc, separate meeting of the lower rank assembly representatives and persuaded them to take an oath to do whatever had to be done regarding three things: protecting the Dalai Lama, protecting the state, and protecting religion. However, as soon as the top-rank officials learned of this illegal meeting, the Kashag ordered Barshi and the others to stop meeting together. They agreed, but first Barshi and some of the other officials took a written oath to come together in the future should the need arise to protect the three principles.

As the time for the start of the Mönlam Prayer Festival was approaching, Barshi got more worried about the safety of the Dalai Lama and his intention to attend the Mönam; he felt the Dalai Lama's life would be in great danger because he would be exposed to the Chinese troops while traveling to and from the Tsuglagang, as well as while residing there. Consequently, he and some of the colleagues who had previously taken the oath made maps so they could position themselves as unofficial undercover guards while the Dalai Lama was at the Mönlam festival. Temba Söpa, a monk official from the Kundeling household who was part of that group, said that during the Mönlam, he and other members attended the assembly wearing simple monk's robes [instead of their monk official uniforms] and mixed in with the ordinary monks while they were acting as informal bodyguards in case trouble arose.[68] Barshi also said he had moved nearer to the Jokhang (to Jayangkyil), where he met frequently with others in this group. He wrote of this,

---

[66] In Tibetan: gcu hril te bsdu gsog rgyag gi red.

[67] Bar zhi rtse mgron (Barshi), ms. n.d., 100.

> I reported through the lord chamberlain [Phala] about the map [of the city we had made] and where we had set up armed secret bodyguards [for when the Dalai Lama traveled to the Tsuglagang and during the Mönlam]. . . . We selected from among the monks and people [in our group] and assigned them places in the Sungjöra (debating area) and the Mönlam. I, being a tsendrön, had to go in front or follow the Dalai Lama, [but] I took my pistol with me, and at the important points, I took great responsibility. By the grace of the Three Jewels, no big obstacles occurred [to the Dalai Lama].
>
> However, in the future, he [Dalai Lama] would have to return to his palace, and furthermore the situation was becoming more and more tense, and it was obvious that there would be one day where we would not be able to guarantee the safety of his life, so we didn't have any choice but to stop the danger at the root. I thought about this day and night, but I didn't get any idea [about how to do that].
>
> Finally, I got the idea to ask Nechung, the State Protector Deity, through the oracle's medium when he [customarily] went into trance in the Muru Nyingma [temple] on the day of the Mönlam Torgyag, the ritual where offerings are burned to drive away evil spirits [the twenty-fourth of the first lunar month, or 3 March]. Because this Tutelary Deity is responsible for the life safety of the Dalai Lama, Buddhism, and the politics of Ganden Phodrang [the Tibetan government], [I thought] it was definite that he would give us a prophecy. So I went to see Khensur Ngawang Lengden, the ex-abbot of Gyümey College, who had great loyalty for the [Tibetan] government, and . . . I told him, "Tomorrow, I am going to Muru Nyingma to ask Nechung for a prophecy, so please come with me." He agreed, so on the next day, I got up at 3 A.M., washed my face, put on my monk's robe, had my breakfast, and on the way I picked up Khensur and we went to Muru Nyingma . . . . It had snowed a little bit, so I thought snowing on the day of the Mönlam Torgyag means blocking the path of the Torma, which is a bad omen.
>
> I waited in the monk's Assembly Hall for some time until the invocation summoning the deity [Tib. jendren] [into the medium's body] started. . . . I and the Khensur offered a khata scarf and asked Nechung's medium, "Please give us a clear prophecy on what kind of method should we take in order to totally overcome the dangers to the life safety of the Dalai Lama."[69] The oracle said, "Do the Neden Changjö rituals [which meant prostrations and making offerings to the sixteen arhats (Tib. neden jutrug)] for His Holiness at religious sites." Then when he was about to leave [go out of trance], I grabbed the metal mirror [Tib. thuksam dzarbang] hanging on his chest and told him,
>
> > "The life vein of the happiness of Buddhism, the land Tibet, and the Tibetan people is the Dalai Lama. At this time, when his life safety is encountering severe danger,

---

[68] Temba Söpa, interview, India, 1994, H.0038.02.

[69] In Tibetan: gong sa skyabs mgon chen po'i sku phya'i nyen 'gan gtan grol thub pa'i thabs shes ji ltar zhu 'gab bka lung gsal ston yong ba zhu.

> you, the great Tutelary Deity, must put forward all of your strength. It is impossible that you would not know the things that we human do not know, such as what to do and what not to do. So please do not be vague and act neglectful like this." As soon as I exclaimed our grievances, the deity acted more militantly, and while he waved the banner on his helmet [shook his head] he sat on the chair and gave the following prophecy: *"It is the right time to ask my master, the Dalai Lama, not to go outside."*[70] Then he stood up and left. . . . Nechung's clerk, Gendün, wrote the prophecy in the [record] book and gave me a copy with the seal of the deity which I took and went to the Jokhang. . . .[71]

Barshi showed the prophecy to Phala and told him to please show it to the Dalai Lama. Phala later told him that he had showed it to [the Dalai Lama], but he had simply returned the written prophecy saying nothing about the Dalai Lama's reaction to it. Consequently, on the morning of 9 March, when Barshi learned about the Dalai Lama's upcoming visit to the show, he immediately thought about Nechung's prophesy "do not go outside" and was sure that the Dalai Lama had to be persuaded not to go to the show.

While he was talking to Yeshe Lhundrup, Commander Taklha came over. As already described, he had already reported to Phala and Gadrang about his meeting with the Chinese telling them about the Chinese stipulations for the visit, and the three had then gone to meet the Dalai Lama. After this, he had gone to the Bodyguard Regiment headquarters at Norbulinga to make arrangements for the next day's visit. On his way back, Taklha ran into Barshi and Yeshe Lhundrup and told them about all the new arrangements the Chinese side had insisted on for the visit. Then Tseja Gyentsen [another official based in Norbulinga who was one of Phala's most trusted associates] came by. When he heard this news, he said, "My goodness. Now what is there to do?" And then Tara, another monk official who worked in the Secretariat's Nangmagang [Private Secretary Office] walked over and joined them, so at this point there were five of these monk officials. They decided they should all go to talk to Phala and urge him to report to the Dalai Lama that he should not go.[72] Drakten explained what happened next,

> Phala said, "Yes. The Dalai Lama's presence at the Military Headquarters is very risky and we can't bear the responsibility [of what might happen]. However, when the Chinese made the invitation, it was done through the Jigyab Khembo [Gadrang] [not me], so we should all go and ask him. . . . So Phala [and the others] left together and went to see Gadrang about this [canceling the show visit] . . . .
>
> Gadrang [however] replied angrily to them, saying "What are you talking about! The Dalai Lama can see the past, the present, and the future clearly. There is no way

---

[70] In Tibetan: nged kyi slob dpon mthong ba don ldan phyir bskyod med pa'i skul ma 'debs re ran.

[71] Bar shi rje drung (Barshi) 2004, 177–78.

[72] Bar shi rtse mgron (Barshi) n.d., 39; Bar shi rje drung (Barshi), 2004, 182.

> I can tell the Dalai Lama to do this and that. What he tells me to do, I do. What not to, I don't do. Whatever he commands, I do. From my lower position I cannot tell him to do this or that, so if you need to ask such things, then you should go yourself and request it. . . . When he said that, Tara immediately got mad and said, "What! This concerns the Dalai Lama's bodily safety. If you don't want to ask, then we will. We know how to ask. . . . According to protocol, we first came with bowed heads [to you], and we have requested this to you." Tara was standing upright [he should have been bowed] and was starting to argue with him so then . . . Gadrang got more furious and aggressive and finally Phala told Gadrang, "We are sorry. Though the way we requested this may not be so correct, we are only concerned with the Dalai Lama's safety and are not here to cause trouble, so please do not be so angry and do not misunderstand us. But Tara also can't be blamed, so do not do reckless things." And so they tried to appease both of them and Gadrang began to cool down. Then he [Phala] said, "Let's go [to the Dalai Lama] and request that he not go." So Gadrang also got up and went with them.[73]

Taklha wrote that only he, Phala, and Gadrang went to try once again to persuade the Dalai Lama, while the others waited, but however many went, in the end, this also was futile, because the Dalai Lama had clearly made up his mind that their fears were unwarranted, and he told them again, "I don't think there is a need for that. I don't think anything will happen. Besides, we have already agreed."[74]

The arrangement between the Chinese and Dalai Lama over the visit, as mentioned above, was done directly with Dalai Lama and Gadrang, not with the Kashag, but we know the Kashag was informed of the visit on the ninth, because the kalöns instructed their two gadrung (secretaries) about this. Gyegyepa, one of those gadrung, recalled the kalöns telling them, "Tomorrow there will be no Kashag because we have to go to the Military Headquarters with the Dalai Lama, so you two do some work on the Kashag's record book (Tib. drönteb), as we won't be coming to the office.[75] The kalöns at that time conveyed no apprehension or anxiety to their staff about the visit. And as will be seen below, the kalöns later also opposed inciting a mass demonstration.

Taklha says that after that, Phala and Gadrang left to carry out the Dalai Lama's instructions, and he went to his regiment's headquarters. The other monk officials, Barshi, Yeshe Lhundrup, Tara, and Tseja Gyentsen, however, were still upset and agitated, so they continued to discuss that it was critical to do something to stop the Dalai Lama from going, despite what he had instructed. At this time, Barshi told the others about his idea of instigating the Lhasa populace to come to

---

73. Drakten, interview, India, 1993, H.0001.11.
74. Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.07. See also Bar zhi rtse mgron (Barshi) n.d., 182–83.
75. Gyegyepa, interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0011.02.

Norbulinga early the next morning to prostrate and beseech the Dalai Lama not to go to the show. Barshi has written about what transpired after that,

> Then we . . . gathered outside at the stone bridge . . . and I said, "Tonight, Tseja Khenjung (Gyentsen) and Gusung Depön (Taklha) must take responsibility for safeguarding the palace (Norbulinga) so that there will be no problems there. Regarding reporting to the Dalai Lama, I asked Khenjung Tara to report either directly [to him] or through the Simpön Khembo (one of his personal attendants). I and Tsendrön Yeshe Lhündrub will go to Lhasa and Shöl to deliver the message to the people. Yeshe Lhündrub was riding a mule, so he went ahead. I rode my bicycle. On the way, I went to see the Tsidrung Letsen Tenmajog, but the monk official in his house said that he had gone to Lhasa. Then, when I was going up the stone stairs up to the Potala, I met Kedram, a captain in the Trapchi Regiment. . . . Then I went to the house of the Tseja Office's chief clerk, Chagdrung and his monk official son Ngawang Chömphel, which was where the members of our group from the assembly meeting had gathered, pretending to play mahjong.
>
> I showed them Nechung's prophecy and briefly reminded them how we had signed the oath and told them, "We have reported to the Dalai Lama that we are going to call the people to assemble."[76] So based on the city sections we had prepared earlier [for which each member had responsibility] we must deliver the message tonight telling the people that they must come to the Norbulinga Secretariat office to prostrate and stop the Dalai Lama from going to the Military Camp.[77]

Maya, a lay official and anti-Chinese activist, also recalled that evening, "That night there was this monk official called [Ngawang] Chömphel who was from the household of the chief clerk who did not sleep the whole night. Now I really don't know if it is alright to tell you this, and so I'd better leave it like this. He went to issue a call [Tib. bögü] to the people to go and demonstrate.[78]

Barshi continued to describe his actions that evening,

> On my way back, I went to see my elder brother Jünpa, who was the co-commander of the Chadang (Police) Regiment and also one of the two Lhasa Mayors [Tib. mipön], and I told him to deliver the message through his office to the Lhasa people.[79]

This visit was actually a crucial part of the dissemination plan. Since private people did not have phones, when the government needed to communicate messages to the populace, there was a group of low-level workers called korchagpa who delivered official messages from the Lhasa mayor's office to the various neighborhoods. Jünpa, as mayor, was in charge of them and ordered them to deliver the

---

76. This, however, has been denied by the Dalai Lama (see below).

77. Bar zhi rtse mgron (Barshi) n.d., 183–84.

78. Maya, interview, India, 1995, H.0039.08. Maya was hesitant talking about this, because it contradicts the established narrative in exile that the 10 March demonstration was spontaneous.

79. Bar zhi rtse mgron (Barshi) n.d., 183–84.

message. One Lhasa resident, Trindor, recalled this, “I remember that the korchagpa went around saying that we had to block the road, since there is a danger the Chinese will steal the Dalai Lama.”[80] He also said that on the evening of 9 March, everyone in Lhasa knew about the show because, “The korchagpa had come with a message saying that Dalai Lama is going to the Military Headquarters and they will take him to China, so everyone should go to block the road.” Trindor added, “A message like that coming from the korchagpa, conveyed to them that this was a government order.”[81]

On that same night, Narkyid, Ngawang Thondrup, a monk official who one of the heads of the Lhasa Nyetsang office, said that he received a secret message from Phala’s trusted colleague Tseja Gyentsen in Norbulinga, telling him to spread the word in the city about the demonstration the next morning. He said he sent the fourteen clerks (Tib. nangsen) in his office to the houses/areas they usually dealt with to convey the message.[82]

However, despite the korchagpas’ and nangsen’s involvement, this clearly was *not* an official government order. We know about this, because Barshi wrote how he was able to convince two monk officials to still help to deliver the message after they learned that two kalöns were opposed to this,

> Tsidrung Yeshe Thargye and Ngawang Chömphel came to my house on bikes and said, “we talked with lay officials such as Maya, Tsewang Gyurme, and they had asked Shape Surkhang, Wangchen Gelek, and the Assistant Kalön Shenkhawa, Gyurme Sonam Tobgye, for instructions. The two kalön told them, “Because it is too dangerous to foment a people’s disturbance [Tib. mi dmangs ‘ur langs bya rgyu nyen kha che bas], you must stop your plan right away.[83]

Barshi wrote that he replied,

> We have voluntarily taken the oath in the Legjö Office for the sake of the general principles of Tibet.[84] Now, it is up to you to decide whether you have solidarity with us and will put into action what we had finalized under the roof of the Avaloketisvara statue in the Jokhang. . . .They said, “We are definitely going to maintain our solidarity, but because we heard that talk [by the kalöns], we came to discuss it with you. We don’t want to withdraw at all.[85]

---

[80] Trindor, comment during an interview with Gyegyepa (interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0011.02).

[81] Trindor, comment made during an interview with Phüntso Yügye (interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0033.01). Trindor also recalled, “Later when some Lhasa residents were asked by the Chinese who caused the uprising, they said it was the korchagpa (Trindor, comment during interview with Gyegyepa, Lhasa, 1992, H.0011.02).

[82] Narkyid, Ngawang Thondrup, interview in Tibetan, *Voice of America*, 17 February 2017, https://www.voatibetanenglish.com/a/3729122.html.

[83] Bar zhi rje drung (Barshi) 2004, 183–85.

[84] This is discussed in chapter 8.

[85] Bar zhi rje drung (Barshi) 2004, 183–85.

The kalöns, however, apparently did not think this would be a serious problem, so did not take any countermeasures to stop people from coming to Norbulinga.

Although Barshi has written that the Dalai Lama had been informed of their plan, that seems not true. It would be difficult to imagine anyone, even Phala, telling the Dalai Lama that despite your instructions about wanting to attend the show, I am organizing a demonstration to prevent you from going! Also the Dalai Lama has commented that he first learned of the demonstration only on the tenth.

> I went outside in the quiet early morning light for a walk in the garden [on the morning of the tenth]. Suddenly, I was startled by shouting in the distance. I hurried back inside and instructed some attendants to find out what the noise was all about. When they came back, they explained that people were pouring out of Lhasa and heading in our direction. They had decided to come and protect me from the Chinese. All morning their numbers grew. Some remained in groups at each entrance to the Jewel Park [Norbulinga], others began to circumambulate it. By noon an estimated thirty thousand people had gathered.[86]

On the other hand, the Chinese learned about the plan for a demonstration at about 8 P.M. on the ninth, when Li Zuomin received a phone call warning him of a possible problem the next morning.[87] This led the Chinese to discuss what they should do, especially whether they should postpone the visit. Li Zuomin, who was involved, explained,

> Probably Ngabö, or someone else, made a phone call to me saying that in the society, people are saying, "Tomorrow, when the Dalai Lama is going to the Military Area Headquarters, a helicopter is ready to fly, and they will put the Dalai Lama in it and take him away." Another thing that was said was that the visit was a Chinese plot and that the Dalai Lama's life is in danger. So there was a discussion [in the TWC] about possibly changing the day of the Dalai Lama's visit. Consequently, I called Political Commissar Tan [Guansan] and asked him, "What shall we do?" Political Commissar Tan said, "It is difficult to tell the Dalai Lama not to come. However, we must look at the situation that is developing and be on the alert to take action to contend with whatever happens." . . . So we were saying that we cannot tell the Dalai Lama not to come, but we also have to uphold the principle of defending ourselves [Tib. rangsung], and we should be on high alert. We will see what we have to do when that time comes.[88]

Consequently, on the evening of the ninth, the message was disseminated throughout Lhasa. How many people would respond would not be known until the next morning, but clearly, neither the message disseminators nor the message recipients had any thought that they were starting an uprising against Chinese rule in Tibet!

---

[86] Dalai Lama 1990, 133. The figure of 30,000 is an exaggeration. Based on photos, I estimate there were probably about 2,500–3,500 demonstrators on the tenth.

[87] Li Zuomin, interview, Beijing, 2011, H.0053.05.

[88] Ibid.

A QUESTION?

The 10 March demonstration is one of the seminal events in modern Tibetan history, so it is important to assess whether the above account is accurate, or even plausible. Barshi asserts that the entire operation of seeking to induce the Lhasa residents to demonstrate was his idea, and that he and his fellow tsendrön, Yeshe Lhündrub, started to spread the warning message in Lhasa with a small handful of officials, mostly monk officials, and then got the Lhasa Mayor's office to send their korchagpa to help deliver the message throughout the city. However, there is reason to believe that it was *not* these lower monk officials who were the brains behind this plan but their boss Phala, who, as has been seen, was the leading anti-Chinese official and the head of a small but active anti-Chinese clique. Chape, a perceptive and well-informed official, commented on Phala's special place in Tibetan politics,

> Phala was the most important official working for the Dalai Lama. At this time the Dalai Lama was young, and whatever the issue, he would go to Phala, who was like his teacher (Tib. gegen). And while the Kashag was higher in rank than Phala, they were all frightened of Phala. So at this time the real power in the Tibetan government was in the hands of Phala. This was known to everyone. Phala was also more powerful than the Jigyab Khembo, although it should really have been the other way around. The Jigyab Khembo at that time was Gadrang, but the Dalai Lama and Phala had a relationship going back years and were very close, and Gadrang was new. His relationship with Dalai Lama, therefore, was not well established and deep, so that is why Phala had more real power.[89]

Another well-respected monk official, Kundeling Dzasa, added, "Kungö Chemmo [Phala] was a kind of a person who having taken on a responsibility, was one who could get things done and not one who would say—Oh, I first have to ask the Kashag, or I have to ask His Holiness. He was a very decisive person."[90] And as has been seen, for years Phala had been willing and able to use his position and power to assist Chushigandru and Jenkhentsisum without the approval of the Kashag.

Phala, therefore, was clearly someone who had the power and personality not only to deliberately ignore the Kashag, but to go against the Dalai Lama's wishes if he was convinced that he was wrong, especially on something as critical as losing the Dalai Lama to the control of the Chinese. Phala's two overriding and related priorities were forcing the Chinese out of Tibet and defending the safety of the Dalai Lama, so his fear that the Dalai Lama may fall into the hands of the Chinese was not a new concern for him. At every turn since 1950, Phala had argued strongly for the Dalai Lama to go into exile, where he would lead the resistance forces and become the voice and symbol of the struggle for a free Tibet. In 1950, he pushed for the Dalai Lama to go to India, and he strongly argued against the Dalai Lama returning to Lhasa from Yadong in 1951 after the Seventeen-Point Agreement was signed. Then in 1954, when the Dalai Lama had ignored his advice and agreed to visit inland China, he secretly tried to block his visit by contacting Alo Chöndze, the head of the People's Association, and telling him to try to use members of his association to block his visit.[91] Also, in 1957 he strongly urged the Dalai Lama to remain in India and not to return to Lhasa. Consequently, this plan to incite the Lhasa mimang to block the Dalai Lama's visit in 1959 fits right in with Phala's priorities and past behavior,

---

[89] Chape, interview, India, 1993, H.0009.03. Gadrang was appointed Jigyab Khembo only in 1957.

[90] Kundeling, interview, India, 1992, H.0067.02.

Moreover, since Phala was the head of the Dalai Lama's Secretariat, he was the direct boss of Barshi and Yeshe Lhündrub, so it would have been easy for him to instruct Barshi to try to induce the Lhasa mimang to come to Norbulinga to stop the Dalai Lama from going to the show, or for Barshi to ask for Phala's approval for his idea to do this. One strong piece of evidence for this comes from Captain Kedram of the Trapchi Regiment, who said that when Barshi came to the Potala Palace on the evening of the ninth to tell him about the demonstration on the tenth, Barshi specifically told him he had been sent by Phala. Kedram recalled,

> A. When we were stationed as guards at the Potala, he [Barshi] came late at night sent by Phala Drönyerchemmo.
>
> Q. Did he say that?
>
> A. Yes. Phala sent him to us. What he said was that the Dalai Lama was going to go to the Chinese military barracks tomorrow and so that is very dangerous . . . so we [the Trapchi Regiment] must be most careful and alert. He did not have a letter saying this; he told it to me verbally.[92]

> And in another interview, Kedram again said, "The *Drönyerchemmo [Phala] sent Tsendrön Bashi to us. We were at Tse [the Potala] and he was sent to our military camp [there].*[93]

Moreover, as mentioned above, Narkyid, one of the heads of the Nyertsang office, said that he received a message from Tseja Gyentsen in Norbulinga telling him to disseminate the message. Tseja Gyentsen, as mentioned earlier, was one of Phala's closest and most trusted partners in anti-Chinese activities, so if he was telling Narkyid to use his nangsen clerks to spread the message, it would have had to have come from Phala. It is hard to believe that Tseja Gyenten would have done something so dangerous and so against the order of the Dalai Lama, without Phala being behind it. Similarly, it is well known that the monk official Temajog was actively involved with spreading the message in Lhasa, and Temajog was an intimate associate of Tseja Gyentsen, so he also would not have done something so dangerous without Tseja Gyentsen's involvement. So if Temajog was deeply involved, it meant that Tseja Gyentsen was involved, and that meant that Phala would have been involved. Temajog and Tseja Gyentsen were so close that when the artillery shelling of Norbulinga was underway and the battle for Lhasa seemed lost, they committed joint suicide by simultaneously shooting each other in Norbulinga. They had been working with JKTS and Phala for years, delivering letters and posters, and had incriminating evidence of this in their rooms, so they did not want to become Chinese prisoners.

---

[91] Goldstein 2007, 482–83.

[92] Kedram, interview, India, 1995, H.0041.04.

[93] Kedram, Interview, India, 1992, H.0041.02.

Lhalu, a former kalön who became a commander in the uprising and was imprisoned for this after the uprising failed, said he heard in prison from a fellow prisoner that the messages were delivered under the instructions of Phala.[94]

Finally, the Dalai Lama himself has indicated that Phala was involved, and the Dalai Lama would have known, if not beforehand, then after the fact. The Dalai Lama said,

> So since there was no other alternative, on the evening of the second Tibetan month, day thirty [9 March], it seems the lord chamberlain (Phala) had something to do with it. . . . Maya la and many others sent the message to Lhasa that evening saying that tomorrow His Holiness is going to the Chinese Military Headquarters and if he did go then it will be most dangerous. So they incited/instigated [Tib. gülung] the people.[95]

In another interview he also said,

> So it was decided to go there [for the show] and then the people [Tib. mimang] came. Now the one who incited/instigated this was perhaps Chemmo (Phala). Chemmo was involved, and Depön [Taklha] also knows a little. And I think Maya and quite a few others were perhaps involved. At that time I did not know things clearly.[96]

Consequently, there is credible evidence to support the contention that Phala used a few monk officials under him in the Dalai Lama's Secretariat to incite the demonstration. On the other hand, it is also possible to take Barshi's assertions at face value. He was known to be an extremist when it came to protecting the Dalai Lama, and he knew his boss Phala was opposed to the Dalai Lama going to the show, so he could have decided himself to try to stop the Dalai Lama. To facilitate that, he took it upon himself to use Phala's name, which would not have been questioned since he worked for Phala in the Secretariat.

---

[94] Lhalu, interview, Beijing, 1993, H.0002.01.

[95] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.

[96] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1994, H.0019.03.

It is not possible to know with certainty which of these versions is correct given the lack of evidence, but whichever is true, what is stunningly clear is that the 10 March demonstration was not a *spontaneous* decision by the residents of Lhasa to go to Norbulinga. Instead, it was the result of the conscious *incitement* of Lhasa residents by a small group of mostly monk officials, likely sent by Phala, who deliberately disobeyed the wishes of the Dalai Lama and took the drastic step of spreading rumors about a serious danger to the Dalai Lama's life in order to foment a massive demonstration to prevent him from attending the show. Had they not intervened, the Dalai Lama would have gone quietly to see the show at the Chinese Military Headquarters on the morning of the tenth and would have returned later that afternoon, because the Chinese, as will be seen, had no intention of harming the Dalai Lama. So there would have been no demonstration and no uprising, at least not then.[97] That mass demonstration on 10 March and its aftermath is the subject of chapter 12.

---

[97] Trindor, a nonelite Lhasa resident, told the author that while he was in prison after the uprising, in the Chinese-run "study sessions" for prisoners, one of the main questions the Chinese asked was "Who started the singdru (uprising)?" He said he thought I would be interested in knowing that the Chinese initially did not get the answer they wanted: "Many didn't know that the correct answer was the Kashag, and said the korchagpa started it" (Trindor, personal communication, Lhasa, 1990).

12

The Lhasa Uprising Begins

As daylight broke in Lhasa, the organizers of the message campaign were unsure how many Lhasans would actually appear at the gates of Norbulinga, and whether their presence would be able to stop the Dalai Lama from going to the show (figure 7). Barshi recalled,

> It was about midnight then [when I got home], . . . but I couldn't fall sleep and spent the whole night thinking about what we should do tomorrow. In the morning, when I washed my face and came to my room, I saw that the people in Shöl [the neighborhood directly below the Potala Palace] had already started going to Norbulinga so I felt a little relaxed. . . . By that time, about 100 people from Shöl had left in front of our house and people were going continuously and there were also Trapchi (Regiment) soldiers going carrying pistols. So I put on my monk's robe and bicycled directly to Norbulinga. In front of the main gate, about 2,000 people had gathered and were shouting the slogan "Your Holiness the Dalai Lama, please do not go the Chinese Military Barracks."[1]

Captain Kedram, who had been contacted by Barshi at the Potala the night before, said he woke up very early on the tenth and rode his bicycle to Norbulinga to see what was going on, since he too wasn't sure how many mimang had been contacted and how many of these would really show up. He recalled,

> When I got to Norbulinga, it was early and people had not yet come, so I started to return to the Potala. However, when I reached Barkokali [the west stupa in front of the Potala], I saw people from Shöl coming in rows. When I asked them where they were going, they said that His Holiness was being invited by the Chinese and so we

---

[1] Bar zhi rje drung (Barshi) 2001, 183–85.

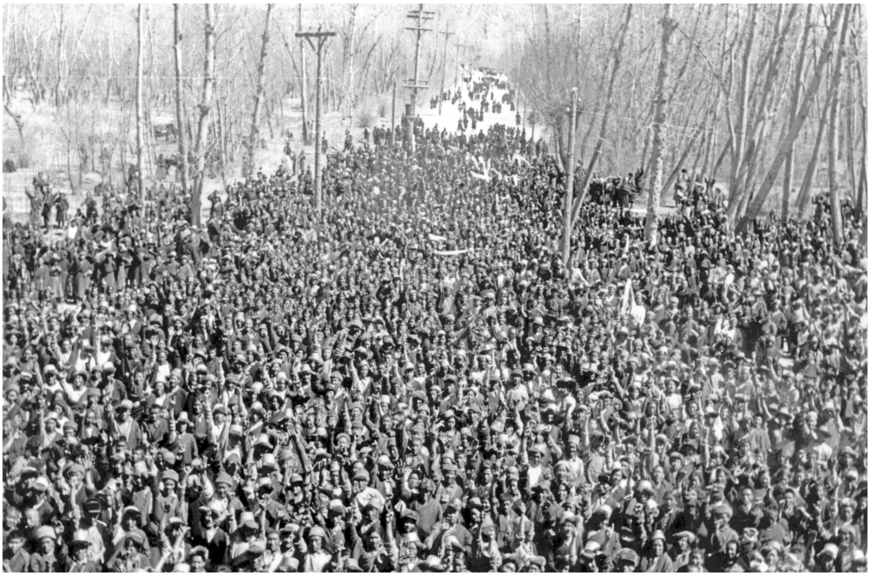


FIGURE 7. Crowds in front of Norbulinga, 10 March 1959. Jogpori Hill is in the background. Courtesy of Photographic Archive, Demton khang Center.

> are going to go and prostrate and ask him not to go. So I thought now it was all right. They knew, and so I returned, following them.[2]

On that morning, several thousand Tibetan mimang came to Norbulinga, some as individuals, some in groups of two or three, and sometimes people from the same courtyard or neighborhood all came together. Most were Lhasa residents, but many were recent arrivals from Kham (Sichuan) and from Amdo (Qinghai). The goal of all was to prevent the Dalai Lama from going to the Chinese Military Headquarters. Everyone was extremely worried and anxious about Chinese intentions and the safety of the Dalai Lama, and were committed to what they thought was saving the Dalai Lama by preventing him from falling into Chinese hands. The faux rumors that had been started by the two monk officials about the Chinese having plans to take away the Dalai Lama had fallen on receptive ears, so now a great crowd was forming in front of Norbulinga (figure 8).

Norbulinga was the Dalai Lama's summer palace. It was a huge park-like complex encompassing about eighty-nine acres that was bounded by an outer wall with four large gates. Originally built by the 7th Dalai Lama in the eighteenth century, it consisted of two sections, an outer area ringed by the outside wall, and an

---

[2] Kedram, interview, India, 1992, H.0041.02.

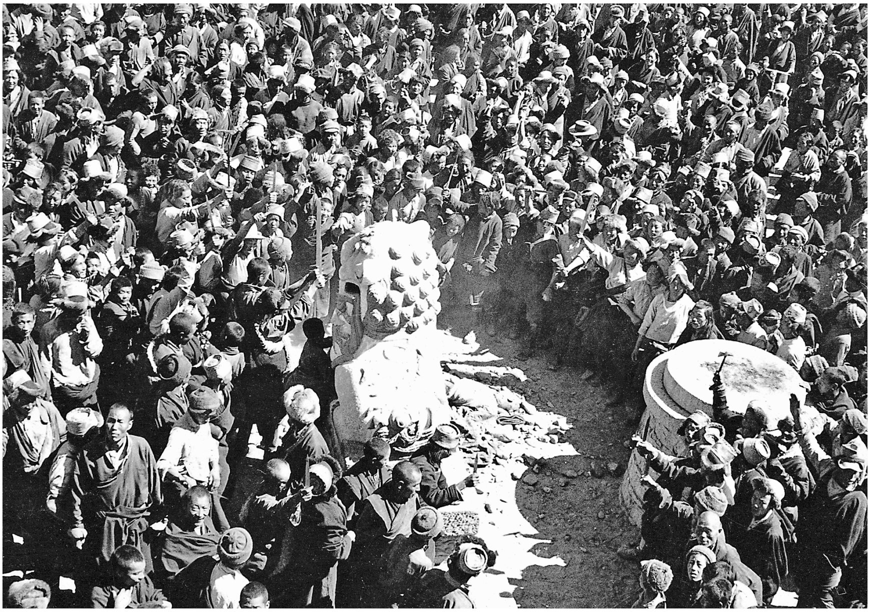


FIGURE 8. Crowds by the stone lion statues at Norbulinga's main gate, 10 March 1959. Courtesy of Photographic Archive, Demton khang Center.

inner area ringed by a yellow wall that enclosed the Dalai Lama's summer palaces and a few other residences. Outside the yellow wall there were other buildings where the Kashag and Tseja met, as well as various residences where Secretariat officials like Phala lived. Normally there were a few guards at the main gate at the outer wall, but the outer part of Norbulinga was open and people could just walk in. However, the area within the yellow wall was guarded by troops from the Dalai Lama's Bodyguard Regiment. It was not open to the public.

At the main gate of Norbulinga on the tenth, a squad of Bodyguard Regiment troops was stationed under the command of a Captain Sidar.[3] As soon as Sidar saw the huge crowd coming toward Norbulinga shouting slogans about not allowing the Dalai Lama to leave for the Military Headquarters, he became apprehensive and closed the gate to prevent them from entering, and then phoned his Commander, Taklha, to explain the situation. Taklha immediately went to Phala and Gadrang to discuss what to do. They all concurred that the arriving crowd should be prevented from entering the palace grounds, and they told Taklha to deploy some of his troops to guard all four gates and to not let anyone [non-officials] in.[4] At this point, the large number of people was just a crowd that had come solely to stop the Dalai Lama's planned visit, not to protest Chinese occupation, let alone to start an uprising or revolt.[5]

---

[3] The Bodyguard Regiment's had one thousand troops on their rolls, but there appear to have been only about six hundred troops actually there in March (Jabo, interview, India, 1993, H.0028.02). They were housed in a walled garrison barracks immediately outside the south gate of Norbulinga.

Drakten, a monk official who had come to Norbulinga to attend the daily Trungja tea ceremony, recalled, "People had flocked in front of the main gate as if they had come to receive a religious teaching. They were seated everywhere, and had blocked the road."[6] He also said that there were about twenty monk officials at the main gate who were letting in officials and staff and even some of the mimang they knew.

Gyegyepa, the Kashag's secretary/aide, recalled feeling confused, "I thought all this was strange, because the kalöns had told us the day before that the Dalai Lama and kalöns were going together to watch some show on the tenth, so they would not be coming to the Kashag's office that day."[7] This was not presented to them as something dangerous, and they were told matter of factly to come to the office on the tenth and try to get caught up with their paperwork. Consequently, Gyegyepa was surprised to see this huge crowd yelling and screaming that the Dalai Lama's visit was an existential threat to his life, when the kalöns and Dalai Lama had obviously not seen it as a dangerous or risky venture.[8]

Meanwhile, preparations had started early that morning for the Dalai Lama's visit. Phüntso Yügye, a member of the Dalai Lama's ceremonial dance troop (Tib. gadrukpa), explained that the gadrukpa like him traditionally had various responsibilities regarding the Dalai Lama's processions and consequently he had received a message from his boss (the garpön) at about 6 A.M. telling him to come to Norbulinga to work.

> I and some others were supposed to sprinkle water on the dirt road [that the Dalai Lama's procession was to take]. We were also told to set up a line of stones on the sides of the road [Tib. dodar] and a white line [Tib. garthig] behind which all the people on the road [waiting to greet the Dalai Lama] had to stand. . . . There were also Chinese troops there using metal detecting devices to check the road the Dalai Lama would use [for hidden bombs].[9]

---

[4] Stag lha (Taklha) 1995, 263–64.

[5] The Lhasa Uprising is called a *singdru* in Tibetan. That term carries a spectrum of meanings, ranging from a sizable disturbance to a violent uprising or an organized revolt, as occurred with Chushigandru's singdru in Lhoka. Since it is common to call the Lhasa incident the Lhasa Uprising in English, I also use that term, but it really started as a demonstration, shifted to a disturbance against Chinese rule in Tibet, and then was morphing into a loosely organized singdru when the "Battle for Lhasa" arose.

[6] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.07.

[7] Gyegyepa, interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0011.02.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Phüntso Yügye, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0033.01. Li Zuomin also mentioned this, saying, "From 12 A.M. on the night of May ninth until the morning, about thirty PLA soldiers carrying a wheel-

The large crowd at Norbulinga was, as indicated, distraught about the message they had received that warned about the danger that would befall the Dalai Lama if he entered the Chinese Military Headquarters. However, the talk of Chinese plans to kidnap the Dalai Lama also exacerbated existing anger and hatred toward the Chinese, who were still generally considered in Lhasa as unwelcome occupiers of Tibet. It is not surprising, therefore, that when a few of the more politically active persons in the crowd started shouting anti-Chinese slogans and calling for the Chinese to leave Tibet, many others followed their lead. At the same time, the crowd's displeasure was also directed at the kalöns, who they thought, incorrectly, were not being tough enough in managing relations with the Chinese, so had allowed the situation to reach what they felt was this dangerous juncture by allowing the Dalai Lama to go to the Chinese Military Headquarters. This viewpoint was already present in 1952 when the first "People's Association" was founded in support of the Sitsab's confrontational strategy to push the Chinese to renegotiate parts of the agreement, especially to send their troops home. However, in this case, despite such criticisms by many of the mimang demonstrators (and some government officials like Barshi), in actuality, as discussed in chapter 11, it was the Dalai Lama himself who had insisted on going to the show, and it was his jigyab khembo, the highest monk official, who made all the arrangements for this without any involvement from the Kashag.

The official plan for the tenth was that the kalöns would meet at Norbulinga and then accompany the Dalai Lama to the Chinese Military Headquarters, so the kalöns started to arrive individually at around 8:30–9:00 A.M. Liushar and Shasur were the first to arrive, wearing their distinctive official yellow satin kalön's dress. Dombor, a tsendrön monk official in the Dalai Lama's Secretariat, was standing in front of the main gate and recalled that the masses were yelling insulting things at them like, "You are exchanging the Dalai Lama for (Chinese) dayan silver coins, and that is too terrible." But they didn't try to stop them from entering Norbulinga.[10] After that, Kalön Surkhang arrived, also wearing his official yellow satin gown. He had come in a Chinese car and driver, but when he saw the huge crowd blocking the main gate, he told his driver to stop a ways back and quickly walked alone the rest of the way to the main gate.[11] Dombor said that the masses also shouted things at him like, "Be careful not to exchange the Dalai Lama for dayan coins," but Surkhang just said, "Yes, yes, yes" [Tib. la la la], and was able to enter the main gate.[12] However, when the newest kalön, Sambo (Tsewang Rinzin),

---

like device were checking whether there were underground bombs set up in the area thirty meters on both sides of the road. They also stationed guards on each side at five meters distance. And there were also PLA were hiding in the parks." Li Zuomin, interview, Beijing, 2011, H.0053.05.

[10] Dombor, Ngawang Rigdrol, interview, India, 1991, H.0031.01.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

arrived, he was attacked by the crowd, which had started morphing into an angry and unruly mob. Palden Gyatso, a Drepung monk, recalled the scene vividly, "A huge crowd had gathered in front of the gate. The crowd was out of control. Everyone was shouting. The crowd had become a mob."[13]

Sambo too was wearing his kalön official dress, but had come in a car with a Chinese driver *and two uniformed Chinese soldiers* because, as discussed in chapter 11, he held the ceremonial rank of a PLA deputy commander, which meant he should always have several PLA soldiers as bodyguards [on official occasions]. When the car reached the huge crowd blocking the road, Sambo began to exit the car, but some people in the crowd started throwing stones at it, one of which hit Sambo's head and knocked him to the ground unconscious. The monk officials standing outside the main gate saw that, and immediately ran over to him, deciding on the spot to take him in his car right to Dekyilingka, the nearby consulate of the GOI, where there was a Western-medicine doctor. From there, the Chinese later took him to their military hospital, where he recovered fully.

The Dalai Lama explained the attack on Kalön Sambo, saying that the crowd was probably reacting to the Chinese soldiers in the car, not to Sambo, and suggested that if Sambo had been alone, he would probably have been able to enter the gate with no trouble.[14] That is possible, but Dombor had a different interpretation. "The masses knew who he was," he said. He was not wearing Chinese clothes. He was wearing a Tibetan official's uniform made from yellow satin with a round dragon design [Tib. dzögö]."[15] In other words, whatever they thought of his PLA bodyguards, from Sambo's dress, they had to have known that they were throwing stones at one of the high-ranking officials in the Tibetan government.[16]

The scene in front of Norbulinga very quickly turned even worse when Chamdo Khenjung (Sonam Gyatso), a Tibetan government monk official arrived. He was the brother of the important Chamdo (pro-Chinese) lama Phagpalha Rinpoche, and was attacked by the mob and beaten to death. Khenjung's murder was witnessed by several Tibetans, one of whom was the monk official Lhautara, who said,

> Chamdo Khenjung . . . had come to attend the Trungja tea ceremony [earlier that morning]. . . . After the Trungja finished, he appears to have gone back to Lhasa, changed clothes, and then returned [to Norbulinga], riding a bicycle while dressed in a layman's dress together with a white gauze mouth protector [like Chinese typically did]. . . . The mimang became suspicious of who that was and some shouted that it must be a Chinese

---

[13] Palden Gyatso 1997, 50.

[14] Dalai Lama 1977, 171.

[15] Dombor, Ngawang Rigdrol, interview, India, 1991, H.0031.01.

[16] There is some talk that the crowd had mistakenly thought that Sambo was Kalön Ngabö, who was the most pro-Chinese of the kalöns, but I doubt it, for if that had been the case, it would have become common knowledge.

> spy, since he was wearing the gauze mask and he was riding his bicycle very suspiciously. So they chased him . . . and began hitting him. He took out a pistol [and fired into the air], . . . Everyone, laymen and monks, men and women, attacked and killed him.[17]

By this time, it was becoming clear that the demonstration was morphing into a dangerous political protest. In addition to yelling criticisms about the work of high Tibetan government officials like the kalöns, people in the crowd started openly shouting anti-Chinese slogans such as "Tibet is independent," "Chinese go home," and "Tibet is for Tibetans." And while the crowd had no internal authority structure, let alone a plan for an organized uprising against the Chinese, there were a number of mimang such as Manang Abo, Tatongwa, and Gopön Nyerpala, who had been involved with the previous anti-Chinese People's Associations and were well-known for their outspoken anti-Chinese views. They appear to have played a role in expanding the focus of the crowd's anger beyond the Dalai Lama's visit toward the overall political situation, that is, toward freeing Tibet from the Chinese.

Meanwhile, as the peaceful demonstration became an anti-Chinese protest, some in the crowd thought it would be useful to internationalize this by going to the nearby Indian Consulate to vocalize their concerns against Chinese rule. Chinese sources reported this, saying, "On the morning of the tenth, the reactionaries dispatched two people [government officials], Khenjung Lama La and Rimshi Shalong [*sic*; Salungpa], who were followed by ten mimang representatives, to the Indian Consulate, where they claimed that Tibet was always an independent country and that from that day on they would formally start a movement for "Tibet Independence." It is said that the Indian Consulate didn't express their opinion on this issue."[18] Prime Minister Nehru explained that incident in his speech to the Indian Parliament in May 1959:

> On the 11th of March, for the first time, we got a message from our Consul General in Lhasa saying that there was some excitement in the town and that a large number of people had come and visited him consisting of representatives of the public/mimang and some Tibetan officials, monks, heads of monasteries, etc. They had come to him with a series of complaints about the Chinese authorities there and they said that they were very much in distress. Now our Consul General in Lhasa was naturally very embarrassed. What is he to do? He did not wish to interfere; it was none of his business to interfere and he told them: "Well, I cannot do anything for you" and he reported to us.[19]

---

17. Lhautara, interview, India, 1992, H.0021.02.

18. "Central Committee's Instructions on 'Measures that Should Be Taken After the Upper Classes Openly Exposed their True Colors of Betraying the Country,'" in Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuan hui et al. 1995, 77–78.

19. "Prime Minister Nehru's reply to the debate in the Rajya Sabha on 4 May 1959," cited in Sen 1960, 198–99.

Thus, the initially peaceful demonstration of 10 March, whose aim was solely to stop the Dalai Lama from going to Chinese Military Headquarters, had now been transformed into an emotional and unplanned protest against the Chinese occupation of Tibet, and to an extent, also criticism about the Kashag for what was perceived as their soft line toward the Chinese, which they thought was due to their being influenced by the Chinese paying them with dayan..

However, despite such criticism of the Kashag by many mimang, the Kashag's policy of trying to maintain cordial and cooperative relations with the Chinese was not because the Chinese were buying their loyalty but because that was the policy of the ruler, the Dalai Lama. As was discussed, the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet in 1957 precisely to work with the Chinese to maintain Tibet's internal autonomy in accordance with the Seventeen-Point Agreement, as Prime Minister Nehru had strongly advised.

Nehru, as was seen in chapter 2, had told the Dalai Lama unambiguously when they met in Delhi that trying to oppose the Chinese militarily was foolhardiness. He said,

> I told him that as he [the Dalai Lama] had already agreed by a Treaty to Tibet being part of China but autonomous, it was not easy for him to break this agreement. Indeed, any attempt to do so would result in a major conflict and much misery to Tibet. In an armed conflict, Tibet could not possibly defeat China. I also pointed out that we had a treaty with China in regard to Tibet. Our position all along had been that sovereignty rested with China but Tibet should be autonomous. Therefore, the best course for the Dalai Lama to adopt was to accept this sovereignty but insist on full autonomy in regard to internal affairs. He would be on strong ground on this, and he could build up the Tibetan people under his leadership.[20]

The Dalai Lama recalled this advice, saying, "He agreed with me that it was useless to try to fight against the Chinese. If we tried, they could easily bring in more forces to crush us completely. And he advised me to go back to Tibet and work peacefully to try to carry out the Seventeen-Point Agreement."[21]

Consequently, the Dalai Lama had returned to Lhasa with the plan that he and the Kashag would work to restore good relations with the Chinese and cooperate with them. Cooperating and having cordial relations with the Chinese, therefore, was the Kashag and the Dalai Lama's pragmatic response to their weak position, which they hoped would enable them to sustain both the internal autonomy Tibet had obtained in the Seventeen-Point Agreement and Tibet's vast religious complex.

---

20. Note to N. R. Pillai, Secretary General, MEA, R.K Nehru, India's Ambassador in Beijing, and Apa Pant, POS, on "Talks with Chou En-lai—IV," 1 January 1957, cited in Hasan 2005, pp. 618–19.

21. Ta la'i bla ma (Dalai Lama) 1963, 148.

Moreover, while many Tibetan officials were receiving salaries from the Chinese, this was associated with work they were doing at the PCTAR offices. Once the PCTAR was started in 1956, the Tibetan government had to send officials to work in the PCTAR's various offices, all of whom received salary from China. However, because very few Tibetan government officials wanted to work for the PCTAR, the Kashag had to order many of its its officials to work there, so their receiving Chinese dayan as salary was not an indication that they were pro-Chinese. In fact, such officials retained their positions in the Tibetan government, and were generally eager to get transferred back to jobs there. That is, most of them had been seconded to the PCTAR.

Nevertheless, when the Lhasa mimang saw leading government officials interacting cordially with the Chinese, it was easy to blame them for not doing something about China's occupation of Lhasa and Tibet, and for the presence of thousands of Chinese troops and officials. Given that Tibet had been a de facto independent country since 1913, it is also easy to understand how Tibetans wanted Tibet to return to being independent, but this was true not only of most of the mimang, but also the government officials. Nevertheless, most of the leading officials understood that under the present conditions that was unrealistic and unlikely. The full Tibetan army had been quickly and easily defeated by the PLA in 1950, and the Dalai Lama, therefore, had agreed to the Seventeen-Point Agreement because it would afford him a measure of internal political and cultural autonomy within the People's Republic in exchange for accepting Chinese sovereignty. Consequently, for the Dalai Lama and the Kashag, the strategy was to continue to administer Tibet with as little interference as possible from the Chinese and no discontinuation of Tibetan customs, language, and religion. So on 10 March 1959, their immediate priority *was to prevent the large crowd/mob from doing something that would inadvertently turn Tibet into the next Sichuan,* which could easily happen if they did not manage affairs adroitly. This was a dangerous and volatile situation, and the Dalai Lama's comments in an interview revealed that he understood this clearly,

> I was certain that what they were doing could only lead to disaster if they continued, and as Head of State I had to try by every means to curb their feelings and stop them bringing about their own destruction under the weight of the Chinese army.[22]

Although the Chinese, as mentioned in chapter 11, had actually learned about the calls for a demonstration at Norbulinga the previous evening at about 8 P.M., they had decided to go ahead with the Dalai Lama's visit on schedule and made preparations for the show on the morning of the tenth. Wang Gui described some of these preparations,

---

[22] Dalai Lama 1977, 187–88.

> On March 10th, the artistic troupe of the Military Headquarters made preparations and were ready to perform. The auditorium was cleaned, and a soft cushioned chair was prepared for the Dalai Lama. The receptionists prepared a variety of refreshments. The Tibetan and Chinese cadres who had been invited arrived early in order to welcome [the Dalai Lama]. General Tan Guansan . . . and some other leaders also came to the auditorium early and waited for the Dalai Lama to arrive. The leaders gathered at the entrance of the auditorium, discussing which programs the Dalai Lama might want to hear an encore. And the performers had put on their makeup.[23]

A Chinese soldier who was there also recalled waiting for the Dalai Lama,

> It was announced on the ninth in the Military Headquarters that the Dalai Lama is coming to see the show tomorrow and that we will be congratulating him on receiving his Geshe Lharamba degree. All troops were told to wear new and clean clothes and should stand in line in the courtyard at 11 A.M. and carry no weapons.
>
> Then suddenly we heard that in Lhasa the people were making a disturbance and that the Commander of the 6th (Tib. Chadang) (Tibetan) Regiment [the Police Regiment] was telling them to do this. Then we were all told to go and prepare to fight a battle. . . . Then things quieted down, and we received an order to again come for the expected visit of the Dalai Lama, so we all got dressed and showed up at the meeting hall of the Military Headquarters.[24]

Li Zuomin gave more details of the welcome they were preparing:

> On March 10th, at the beginning, in the Military Headquarters Area Command, they wrote a big-letter poster in Chinese and Tibetan to welcome the Dalai Lama, saying "The meeting to warmly welcome the Dalai Lama to visit the Military Area Command to watch the show."[25] And the Tibetan letters were written above the Chinese. At midday on the ninth, I learned that earlier that year the Dalai Lama had passed the geshe lharampa exam, so I told Tan Guansan and he told me to change the big-letter welcome sign into: "The meeting to warmly celebrate the Dalai Lama's receiving the title of geshe lharampa."[26]

However, back at Norbulinga, the attack on Sambo, the murder of Khenjung, and the anti-Chinese slogans being shouted made it obvious to the kalöns that the crowd was acting like an unruly, political mob that was capable of attacking Chinese offices and personnel, and could quickly turn Lhasa into a bloody battlefield that would threaten both the Dalai Lama's safety and the current status quo arrangement. So as mentioned above, now the Dalai Lama and the Kashag (and the two main monk officials Phala and Gadrang) had to decide how they should respond to calm and/or disperse the crowd quickly, and then explain all this to the Chinese in a way that would maintain Sino-Tibetan relations.

---

[23] Wang Gui 2003, 183.

[24] Zong Zidu 1989, 124–25.

[25] It said in Tibetan: spro sems 'khol ba'i ngang nas ta la'i bla ma bod dmag khul khang la gzigs mor phebs par dga' bsu zhu.

[26] Li Zuomin, interview, Beijing, 2011, H.0053.05. In Tibetan: spro sems 'khol ba'i ngang nas ta la'i bla ma dge bshes lha rams pa'i mtshan thob byung bar rten 'brel gyi tshogs chen.

The first step the Tibetan government took was to prevent the thousands of mimang who were milling around outside the wall from shifting their demonstration to within Norbulinga, so they closed all four of its gates. Tempa Söpa, a monk official, said that he and another monk official were ordered by Tara from the Secretariat's Nangmagang office to go with three monks to lock all the outer gate's doors, each one of which already had five or six Bodyguard Regiment soldiers on duty there. After he finished that, he said,

> We returned and told Tara that we had locked the gates and gave him back the keys. . . . Right after that, he [Tara] dispatched younger government officials [like us] to stay on guard at the gates together with the soldiers. I was sent to guard the east back door [Tib. dago shar] of the yellow [inner] wall.[27]

The Kashag and the leading monk officials had feared that if the large, angry crowd of mimang was able to swarm inside Norbulinga, there was no telling what they might do to the grounds and the government offices there. For example, in 1921, a large group of monks from Drepung's Loseling College, who were angry at a decision of the 13th Dalai Lama, broke into Norbulinga's inner ("yellow wall") area and went to the palace where the Dalai Lama was residing and proceeded to yell protests at him, while ripping up his flowers and defecating in his garden.[28]

Meanwhile, Kalöns Surkhang, Liushar, and Shasur were waiting for the fourth kalön, Ngabö, to arrive, but he never came, for reasons Ngabö explained,

> At about 6 or 7 P.M., I received a call from Deputy Kalön Liushar telling me that all the Kalöns should meet at Norbulinga tomorrow at 9 A.M. to accompany the Dalai Lama to the Military Headquarters at 10 A.M. Because the senior kalön, Surkhang, did not have a phone in his house, I was told to relay this information to him.
>
> [However,] on the morning of March 10th, a political study committee [Tib. lobjong uyön lhengang] meeting had been scheduled [at the PCTAR for all the officials who were working there], so . . . I first went there to preside over this session, bringing my official [kalön's] attire with me [to later wear at Norbulinga].[29]

---

[27] Tempa Söpal, interview, India, 1994, H.0038.02.

[28] For a discussion of this event see Goldstein 1989, 105–9. In this incident, the 13th Dalai Lama ordered Loseling College to turn over the ringleaders of a prior disturbance against the government, and when they refused, he called out the Tibetan army under Tsarong Dzasa and they set up tent camps in front of Drepung and threatened to attack if Loseling didn't surrender the ringleaders. Loseling eventually acquiesced.

[29] Ngabö was the General Secretary of the PCTAR as well as a kalön.

Ngabö was actually waiting at the PCTAR to get word about the situation at Norbulinga.

> I waited for a telephone call from Norbulinga, since I wanted to see what the situation was there. It was not yet 10 A.M. when Sambo . . . was injured by a rock . . . Then, after 10 A.M., [I was informed that] Khenjung Sonam Gyatso . . . had been killed by the rebels at the gate of Norbulinga.[30]

Ngabö feared he would be in danger if he went there, so instead went directly to the Chinese Military Headquarters. The other three kalöns at Norbulinga waited awhile, but then decided to go alone to discuss the situation with Gadrang, and together with him, went to see the Dalai Lama, who recalled their visit,

> These three ministers, having come through the crowd themselves, realized that something must be done very quickly to avert a crisis; they thought the crowd might try to attack the Chinese headquarters. . . . so the three of them held a meeting together with the Chikyab Khempo [Jigyab Khembo Gadrang] . . . and came to see me.[31] They told me that the people had decided I must not be taken to the Chinese camp for fear that I would be abducted and taken away to China. The crowd had already elected a kind of a committee of sixty or seventy leaders, and had taken an oath that if the Chinese insisted I should go, they would barricade the palace and make it impossible for me to be taken out of it. And the Cabinet [Kashag] told me the crowd was so alarmed and resolute that it really would not be safe for me to go.[32]

In his later biography, the Dalai Lama added,

> I was appalled at this news [of the demonstration's violence]. Something had to be done to defuse the situation. It sounded to me as though, in a fit of anger, the crowd might even be tempted to attack the Chinese garrison.[33]

The Dalai Lama at this time was still young—twenty-four years old—but he was much more worldly than when he took office as a fifteen-year-old in 1950. Since that time, he had spent a year in Beijing and other cities in inland China, and had met Mao and all the top leaders of China and made decisions about policy in Tibet with them. He had also spent more than three months in India in late 1956–57, where he met Nehru and other top Indian leaders, and then in January 1957 he had made the very difficult decision to return from India to Tibet. Also, for the past eight years he had served as the head of the Tibetan "local" government, so had been continually dealing with the TWC leaders and his own top officials regarding Sino-Tibetan affairs. Consequently, trying to sustain Sino-Tibetan relations to further Tibet's interests as he understood them was not something new. He actually had experience making difficult decisions like the current one he faced—what to do to defuse the dangerous and volatile situation outside his summer palace.

---

[30] Ngapo [alternative spelling for Ngabö] 1988, 3–4.

[31] Chikyab khempo is an alternative spelling for jigyab khembo.

[32] Dalai Lama 1977, 71–72.

[33] Dalai Lama 1990, 133.

The Dalai Lama, as mentioned, had already made a firm decision on 9 March to reject the strong recommendations of Phala, Gadrang, and Taklha, because he did not believe the rumors about Chinese bad intentions, and because he believed his presence would enhance his relations with the TWC. And he was certainly correct. The Chinese were not planning to abduct him to Beijing, but rather were planning to give him a warm welcome. Consequently, had those few monk officials working under Phala, like Barshi, not decided to simply ignore the Dalai Lama's wishes and deliberately incite a mass demonstration in the name of "protecting" him from the Chinese, nothing would have happened on 10 March, and Tibetan history would have been very different.

Instead, they were now faced with a huge demonstration that had morphed into a dangerous mob that was milling around the palace wall yelling anti-Chinese slogans and saying they will not allow their ruler, the Dalai Lama, to leave the Norbulinga Palace to attend a performance he wanted to see. Tibet, therefore, had now suddenly and unexpectedly arrived at the edge of the precipice that Tan Guansan had warned Kalön Surkhang about, and was in danger of riding right over it, but now the horse was not being driven forward by the insurrection of the Khambas in Lhoka, but by the Lhasa mimang. The question now was whether the Dalai Lama and Kashag, in conjunction with Phala and Gadrang and other leading officials, would be able to devise a way to quickly rein in that horse by getting control over the demonstrators, and in the process, convince the Chinese of their continuing cooperation under the Seventeen-Point Agreement.

In this dangerous and volatile situation, the Dalai Lama and his advisors took the easiest course of action. Rather than confront the crowd, they recommended that the Dalai Lama now reverse his decision about attending the show and cancel his trip to Chinese Military Headquarters. The hope was that when the crowd was informed of this, the mimang's fears would be resolved, and they would agree to return home quickly.

But first the Chinese had to be notified that the demonstration was not the Dalai Lama's doing but rather was preventing him from attending the show. Gadrang, therefore, immediately informed Li Zuomin about the change through a direct phone line they shared. The Dalai Lama explained,

> By the time the Cabinet members [Kalöns] came to see me, I could hear what the people were shouting: "The Chinese must go." "Leave Tibet to the Tibetans."- All their slogans demanded an end of the Chinese occupation and of Chinese interference with the Dalai Lama's rule. Hearing the shouts, I could feel the tension of these people. . . .

> This outbreak of violence [Phagpalha Khenjung's murder, Sambo's injury] gave me great distress. I told my Cabinet to tell the Chinese general that I could not attend the performance and that it would not be wise for anyone from his headquarters to come to the Norbulingka at present. My senior chamberlain [Jigyab Khembo Gadrang] telephoned the general's interpreter [Li Zuomin] and gave him this message, with my apologies and regret. The interpreter agreed that my decision was correct, and said he would give the message to the general [Tan Guansan].[34]

Li Zuomin recalled receiving that phone call from Gadrang,

> At around 9 A.M., Gadrang called and said, "Although it had been confirmed that the Dalai Lama will come [today], now the situation is strange and there are many people, both males and females, from the Lhasa mimang coming to Norbulinga with tears in their eyes. There are a lot of people who have gathered near the main gate and the north gate and the rebels [Khambas] are carrying guns and causing disturbances. Consequently, for the sake of his safety, Rinpoche [the Dalai Lama] cannot come. Please report this to the Political Commissar [Tan Guansan]."
>
> So just before 10 A.M., I reported this to our Political Commissar [Tan] who said, "Do not pay attention to what he is saying. We must still prepare as if he [the Dalai Lama] is going to come." . . . I called back to Gadrang, but the phone line was cut. I am sure the rebels did it.[35]

Li Zuomin added that Gadrang told him that the Dalai Lama "hoped normality would be restored very soon and the crowds would be persuaded to disperse."[36] In other words, the Dalai Lama and his top advisors tried to convey to the Chinese that they had nothing to do with this demonstration and were working to persuade the crowd to go home soon.

Once the Dalai Lama had informed the Chinese that he was unable to attend, it was decided that Surkhang, as the senior kalön, should speak to the assembled crowd about this new situation via a loudspeaker system that had been set up in a room on top of the main gate.[37] Drakten, a monk official who was there, recalled what Surkhang said.

> Surkhang climbed the narrow stairs to the top of the main gate and spoke to the people, saying, "Today you, the mimang, have come because you were very concerned

---

[34] Dalai Lama 1977, 172–73.

[35] Li Zuomin, interview, Beijing, 2011, H.0053.06.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Dombor, Ngawang Rigdrol was a monk official (tsendrön) who was working with the twenty-five Tata trucks that he had helped the Dalai Lama buy while he was in India. These were taken apart and shipped to Tibet, where they were reassembled and used for transporting goods. On 10 March he was scheduled to send a truck to Yadong, but the demonstration prevented that, so he went to Norbulinga to see what was going on. When they wanted to be able to speak to the crowd, he was asked to set up their loudspeaker system. Ngawang Rigdrol, interview, India, 1993, H.0031.02.

> about His Holiness going today, but now you can all breathe easy. Just now His Holiness himself has said that he will not be leaving today and he told us [kalöns] to go to the Chinese Headquarters to give them this message. He also said that the mimang who have come here should not create such a commotion and should return home. So we are going there [to the Military Headquarters] and you all should be content because what you have been requesting has been fulfilled. His Holiness is not leaving here today. You can relax and leave."[38]

Surkhang's comments, however, were met with some jeers and insults that would have been inconceivable to say to a kalön just one day before. For example, Phüntso Yügye recalled,

> When Surkhang spoke to the crowd, the people yelled [things like], 'Hey you, don't tell lies!' [Tib. ge mabin ma shö].[39] They wouldn't listen and shouted, . . . 'All of you [government officials] have been taken in by dayan [Chinese silver coins].'[40]

And the demonstrators made no move to disperse!

After Surkhang's speech, Drakten recalled witnessing an informal meeting between the three kalöns and some of the mimang's "leaders" who had been let inside Norbulinga. At this time there were about thirty such mimang representatives inside the gates. Drakten said that while Surkhang was speaking [to the crowd], Kalöns Shasur and Liushar were waiting for him . . . leaning against a tree. After Surkhang [finished], he joined them, and then eight or nine of the people's representatives came over to where the three kalöns were standing and laid a khata scarf on the ground in front of them as a sign of respect. A few of these representatives, such as Gopön Nyerpala, Kundeling Tatongwa, and Manang Abo, were the more outspoken ones. They told the kalöns bluntly that they will not disperse unless the Kashag met certain conditions,

> Just now you are going to go to the Chinese headquarters to talk, and from the rooftop [the top of the gate] you just told the mimang they should return home and be content because what they had come to do has been achieved, since His Holiness is not going to the show. So, to the mimang who have arrived today, you were telling them to return home. But what if His Holiness goes [to the Military Headquarters for the show] tomorrow? Are we supposed to come here every day like this? So please don't say things that are meant to deceive the mimang. If you have to go to the Chinese to talk now, then tell them that His Holiness should [in the future] only move around like he traditionally had done between the Potala and Norbulinga, as well to the Tsuglagang [but not to other meetings and so forth]. . . . His Holiness is known

---

[38] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.07.

[39] *Ge* was an extremely derogative and insulting term that a commoner would never say to a government official, let alone the senior kalön. *Mabin ma shö* was also a highly derogatory and rude way of speaking to a government official.

[40] Phünto Yügye, interview, India, 1993, H.0033.01.

> as the "Universal Jewel" of Tibet, so from this day on, when His Holiness has to move about from gyekhab to gyekhab (country to country [note: this would include China]), you cannot make any decisions about this *without the consent of the mimang.* So regarding this, you should talk with them [the Chinese], and if you can come to such an agreement with them, then the mimang will go home. But until that is agreed to, the mimang will not leave, even if you tell us to do so." . . . Those were the exact words, since I was there and I heard it.[41]

The Dalai Lama added that the mimang leaders also wanted an assurance that the Dalai Lama would never accept any invitation to go to the Military Headquarters compound in the future.[42]

This was an unprecedented challenge to the authority of the Kashag, the Dalai Lama, and the Tibetan government, and normally would have led to their detention, or a threat of detention if they didn't comply, followed by an investigation. For example, the Kashag had terminated the two previous "People's Associations," and just a few months prior, had stopped Barshi's ad hoc assembly meeting. But on the tenth, when the mimang defied the Kashag and would not comply with its orders, the Kashag accepted their demand that from now on they will remain at Norbulinga to "defend" the Dalai Lama as a "volunteer" force. This response, not surprisingly, further enhanced the mimang's feeling of power and acted as an enabler for their view that they were necessary to protect the Dalai Lama and make sure that the Kashag and the other leading officials did not "sell out" the Dalai Lama to the Chinese.

Barshi explained how he and the others rationalized not obeying the Dalai Lama, saying, "So I told some of the representatives 'The Dalai Lama will call us and he will tell us not to do [things] and not to look [or follow bad people] [Tib. ma che ma da]. [Note that this is normally said by parents educating their children.] He doesn't have any choice but to say that. We, however, cannot withdraw from doing our work. If we withdraw, it will be disgraceful. This time, we must work to the end and accept whatever kind of scolding we may receive.'"[43]

So those who had guns, mostly the Khambas, stayed to guard the palace, and others started to write posters saying things like "Chinese go home" to be put up in the city. Then several hundred demonstrators expanded the protest by dragging Phagpalha Khenjung's corpse back to Lhasa city and organizing people's protest demonstrations there. Sopel, who marched back with this group at about 3–4 P.M. said,

> A. It started in Norbulinga where they were shouting, "From today on Tibet is independent." . . . We came together with them. On the way back, at Kundeling, where

---

[41] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.07.

[42] Dalai Lama 1977, 174.

[43] Bar zhi rtse mgron (Barshi), ms. n.d., 118.

> the Chinese had a billboard on which they used to post newspapers, the crowd burned that. And when they reached Yuthok, where Zhang Guohua lived, they spat . . . at the guards who were standing on each side of the door.
>
> Q. What did the guards say?
>
> A. They didn't say anything. At that time, they wouldn't do anything. Then the people went in front of the Jokhang, where there was a big image of American imperialists with high noses and chains, and they ripped it down.[44]

Kedram, the Trapchi Regiment captain, also witnessed this. He had been going back to Norbulinga from the Potala when the group of several hundred demonstrators were taking Khenjung's corpse to Lhasa. "The mimang were coming towards Lhasa in rows," he said, "dragging the dead body of Phagpalha Khenjung. They were shouting, 'Tibetans are the owners of Tibet,' and 'The Chinese must go home.'"[45] Kundeling Dzasa added that when they dragged the body back, "The mimang were going through all the alleys in Lhasa and were shouting things like, 'It was not right for the Chinese imperialists to invade Tibet,' 'the Chinese troops must go home,' 'Tibet is for Tibetans and Chinese are not allowed to stay.' The Dalai Lama also commented on this,

> A crowd had dispersed [a section of the demonstrators had left to protest in Lhasa], though there was still a large number of people surrounding the main gate. Those who had left, we learned later, had gone into the city to hold public meetings and stage mass demonstrations against the Chinese. At the meetings they denounced the Seventeen-Point Agreement on the ground that the Chinese had broken it, and they demanded once more that the Chinese should withdraw.[46]

Consequently, well after Surkhang had informed the demonstrators that the Dalai Lama had canceled his visit, the crowd/mob was still active, and now the focus of their attention was Chinese rule in Tibet and on *their* role in defending the safety of the Dalai Lama. The mimang were rushing around doing whatever they felt like, and the Dalai Lama and his government had no control over them. What the Dalai Lama had said is worth repeating,

> I was certain that what they were doing could only lead to disaster if they continued, and as Head of State I had to try by every means to curb their feelings and stop them bringing about their own destruction under the weight of the Chinese army.[47]

Since this event was a critical point in Tibetan history, were there alternatives that the Dalai Lama/Kashag could have pursued? In other words, did the Dalai Lama really try every means to curb them as he said? Objectively, the answer is not really. One alternative response would have been for the Dalai Lama/Kashag to order his Tibetan army troops that were present at Norbulinga to force the crowd to disperse and then stay on duty there to prevent them from returning. Once dispersed, the Dalai Lama could have gone to the show.

---

[44] Söpel, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0083.01.

[45] Kedram, interview, India, 1995, H.0041.04.

[46] Dalai Lama 1990, 185.

[47] Dalai Lama 1977, 187–88.

Another version of this would have been to deploy the Tibetan army troops around his car to force the crowd to let his car leave. It should be emphasized that when the mimang left their houses early that morning for Norbulinga, their goal was simply to persuade/prevent the Dalai Lama from going to the show by their presence in front of the gates. Consequently, while the crowd was highly emotional and angry, *they were not angry at the Dalai Lama.* To the contrary, they had come because of their deep belief in his spiritual greatness and in what he represents for Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan "nation." This was, therefore, a crowd that was completely loyal to the Dalai Lama and believed that Tibet's success depended on the safety of the Dalai Lama in Tibet. So no one in the crowd would have dared to throw stones or otherwise attack the Dalai Lama's car. At most, they would have laid down in front of it, blocking the road.

Had the Dalai Lama's Bodyguard Regiment forced a path for the Dalai Lama's car, once the Dalai Lama returned safely, the crowd would have seen firsthand that the Chinese had not been planning to harm the Dalai Lama or whisk him away to Beijing, and therefore it would have been easier to persuade them to leave or to disperse them. But were these or other alternatives really feasible?

This raises the question, did the Dalai Lama have reliable troops on hand in Norbulinga, ready to use? He did. The Bodyguard Regiment was garrisoned adjacent to the south gate of Norbulinga and had about six hundred or seven hundred soldiers on duty. These troops were trained soldiers who were armed with modern rifles, Bren guns, Sten guns, and machine guns. Moreover, their commander was the Dalai Lama's brother-in-law, Taklha, who was completely loyal to him. Consequently, if the Dalai Lama decided to leave in his car, Taklha could have deployed his troops around his car to clear the way if some mimang still tried to stop the car.

In addition, elements of the Trapchi Regiment had already been sent to Norbulinga early that morning to be on alert; that is, to monitor the situation, so they would also have been on call should trouble arise. Jabo, a lieutenant (Tib. shengo) who was in charge of one such Trapchi platoon, for example, recalled his orders on the morning of the tenth.

> The next day [the tenth], when we were getting up, the people already had started to going to Norbulinga. After that, I took a detachment [of about ten soldiers] to Norbulinga carrying rifles, a Bren gun and ammunition boxes. . . . At that time, we had placed troops in all the alleys, and I was stationed on the roof of Langkhang . . . a house that was located near the main gate of Norbulinga.[48]

---

[48] Jabo, interview, India, 1993, H.0028.01.

So the Dalai Lama/Kashag could have quickly amassed a large force of armed troops at Norbulinga. By contrast, the crowd, although not completely weaponless, basically only had some pistols and rifles and swords—and of course rocks.

Lieutenant Jabo also mentioned an interesting method of small-scale "crowd dispersal" that he used some days later when the Dalai Lama took the ferry across the Yarlungtsangpo River while fleeing Lhasa to Lhoka. A large crowd of Tibetan villagers had heard rumors that he was coming so had gathered on the south side of the river, seeking to get a chance to see and get blessed by him. Jabo, one of the army officers who was accompanying the Dalai Lama, explained that, "When we got on the other side of the river, there were many people and they didn't go away when I told them to, so I just galloped my horse amidst the crowd of people and they ran away."[49]

However, the Kashag either did not think they could force their way through the crowd or didn't want to risk creating a situation where the army might as a last resort have had to fire on the crowd, so they did not discuss alternatives with the Dalai Lama and just left the crowd doing whatever it felt like, despite the obvious danger it posed to Sino-Tibetan relations. Of course, the Dalai Lama also did not ask them for alternatives.

THE KALÖNS VISIT CHINESE MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

The Dalai Lama and the kalöns decided that in addition to the phone call, it would be better if the three kalöns went in person to explain to the Chinese what happened and try to persuade them that the demonstration was not the Tibetan government's doing. This was not a trivial step, since they had no idea of the extent of the Chinese anger about the anti-Chinese, pro-independence slogans being shouted by the demonstrators. However, before going, the kalöns first had to deal with the agitated crowd that was still blocking the road in front of Norbulinga. Despite Surkhang's explanation to them about the Dalai Lama's decision and the kalön's talk with the mimang leaders inside Norbulinga, the crowd did not make way for the kalöns' cars until they searched it thoroughly to make sure the Dalai Lama was not hidden somewhere in it. The kalöns, the highest officials in the government, complied with the search, and only then were allowed to go. This humiliation, of course, further emboldened the leaders of the crowd, who had already gotten away with murdering a Khenjung and seriously injuring a kalön with no consequences.

---

[49] Jabo, interview, India, 1993, H.0028.02.

There are several accounts of the kalöns' meeting with Tan Guansan from the Tibetan side and one account from the Chinese side. All are basically similar, although some specific details are different. One account is from the Dalai Lama,

> When the ministers came back that afternoon, they told me what had happened at the Chinese headquarters. General Tan Kuan-sen [*sic*; Tan Guansan] was not there when they arrived, but ten other officers were waiting for them, apparently engaged in a serious conversation. . . . Ngabo was sitting with the officers, but he did not seem to be taking part in their discussion. He did not leave his seat to join the ministers when they entered.
>
> For some time, not a word was spoken by either side about events of the day. The Chinese officers seem to be unconcerned, and they inquired politely about the ministers' health. But the atmosphere suddenly changed when General Tan Kuan-sen came in and took charge of the proceedings.
>
> The ministers told me the general seemed very angry when he came into the room. His appearance was intimidating, and the ministers rose nervously from their seats to show him respect. For a few minutes he seemed to be speechless with rage, and he did not greet the ministers. Surkhang opened the conversation by telling him that I had sent them to explain what had happened to prevent me from attending the dramatic performance. He said I had had every intention of coming, but the people's wishes were so strongly against it that I had had to give up the idea. The other two ministers also added their explanations. By the time the interpreter had finished, the general was visibly red in the face. He rose from his seat and started pacing up and down the room, apparently beside himself with anger. After a great appearance of effort, he managed to control himself and sat down again. Then with studied deliberation and slowness of speech, he began a harangue against the ministers and "Tibetan reactionaries." Although he seemed to be trying to control his temper, his voice often rose sharply and his simmering anger burst out in rude and abusive language. He was using Chinese words which are never spoken in any polite Chinese society. The general point of the harangue was that the government of Tibet had been secretly organizing agitation by the people against the Chinese authorities and helping the Khambas in their rebellion. Tibetan officials had defied the orders of the Chinese and *refused to disarm the Khambas in Lhasa*, and now drastic measures would be taken to crush the opposition to Chinese rule. Two other generals made similar tirades. One of them declared the time had come to "destroy all these reactionaries. . . . Our government has been tolerant so far," he said, "but this is rebellion. This is the breaking point. We shall act now, so be prepared!"
>
> My bewildered ministers took these harangues as an ultimatum of military action if the popular agitation did not cease at once. They were convinced the prospect was dangerous and involved the safety of the person of the Dalai Lama; and they felt that if anything happened to me, there would be nothing left of Tibet. They tried to counsel patience. Shasur told the general that the Chinese should try to understand the ordinary Tibetan people and be patient and tolerant. They should not make a serious situation worse by retaliation. And he assured him that the Cabinet would do all that

> was possible to prevent an outbreak of lawlessness among the Khambas or any Tibetans who might be foolhardy enough to try to provoke a clash of arms with the Chinese occupation forces. But the Chinese generals would not accept this assurance or listen to this advice.[50]

Dombor, a monk official, said that after that meeting, Kalön Shasur personally told him about his fear of being arrested by the Chinese at the meeting,

> Shasur told me . . . the Chinese were scolding them a lot and he thought they probably would not be able to leave that place. He thought the Chinese would probably seize them. Then a high official, probably Tan Guansan . . ., pointed his finger at them and said, "Remember His Holiness is in your hands." So [when he said that] then Shasur knew they were not going to be seized and felt greatly relaxed.[51]

The kalöns, of course, understood why the Chinese were so angry and were in agreement that this chaotic situation needed to be stopped before the situation further deteriorated into Sino-Tibetan violence, so they assured Tan Guansan that they were in the process of taking care of the matter. However, the Kalöns also knew that taking care of the situation would be difficult. They had not even been able to drive there without allowing their car to be searched by the crowd/mob, so despite their diplomatic words and upbeat promises, the reality was that since they and the Dalai Lama had not taken action to disperse the crowd earlier in the day, the situation was getting worse, and the potential for an ad hoc and unplanned physical confrontation with the Chinese in Lhasa was real and increasing.

Kundeling Dzasa, an important monk official, recalled the high emotions that had been unleashed as well as the lack of any plans and preparations for starting an uprising,

> We were not at all prepared [for launching an uprising against the Chinese] in terms of numbers, military equipment, and so many other factors. But they were so angry that it seemed that it was not even possible [for them] to listen. By this time, the killing of Chamdo Khenjung and the stoning of Sambo in the head had already taken place. The people had become enraged.[52]

Nevertheless, when the kalöns returned to Norbulinga, they tried again to disperse the crowds and restore calm through discussions with the mimang leaders. They informed the leaders that the Chinese had agreed that it was okay for the Dalai Lama not to come to their headquarters, and told them that since the Dalai Lama was no longer in any danger, the mimang should go home now. However, no matter what the kalöns said, the mimang leaders refused to agree and the crowd

---

50. Dalai Lama 1990, 174.
51. Dombor, Ngawang Rigdrol, interview, India, 1991, H.0031.01.
52. Kundeling Dzasa, interview, India, 1992, H.0067.02.

did not leave. The kalöns then decided that the best way to control the mimang was to try to co-opt them by inviting them to join an emergency Tibetan Government Assembly meeting that had been called to discuss the situation that evening. The mimang leaders were told to select more representatives from the mimang's ranks and come to the assembly meeting at 6 P.M. that evening in Norbulinga.[53] Kundeling Dzasa, who was a major figure in the uprising and escape of the Dalai Lama commented on this,

> Finally, the Kashag said that just talking to the crowd was a waste of time and that you all should organize, whether by geographical areas [in the city], or by courtyards or whatever, but make some groups [Tib. tsho], and each group should appoint a leader and these should come inside Norbulinga and then we could talk. So they appointed their own leaders.[54]

This was the first time in Tibetan history that the mimang were asked to select their own representatives and participate in an official National Assembly meeting.

THE EMERGENCY ASSEMBLY MEETING

Notices were sent from Norbulinga to the government officials living in Lhasa telling them to come for this assembly meeting. Drakten's message, for example, said that all those of the drungtok (clerk) rank and above should come to an Emergency Large Assembly Meeting (Tib. dzadra tsondu gyendzom).[55] So on the tenth, the first of what would be a series of Tibetan Assembly sessions was convened at the Shabden Lhagang Prayer Hall in Norbulinga. Because this assembly meeting had the self-selected mimang participating as full representatives, this assembly is sometimes referred to as a "People's Assembly Meeting," but it was actually a regular Tibetan Government Assembly meeting that was chaired, as usual, by the eight Trungtsi (the four tsipön and four trunyichemmo) and included government officials, clerks, army officers, monastic segment representatives along with the forty or fifty new *representatives of the "people."* Virtually all Tibetan government officials who spoke of it in interviews used the traditional names for the different size assembly configurations such as the Tsondu gyentsom (Full Assembly) or the Tsondu hragdu (Abbreviated Assembly). The first assembly meeting on the tenth, for example, was a Full Assembly meeting.[56]

A variety of viewpoints were presented at that meeting. The mimang's representatives conveyed a series of grievances that included their wish, as mentioned above, for new rules limiting the travel of the Dalai Lama outside his palaces. And they asserted that whenever Chinese officials wanted to communicate with the Dalai Lama, they had to do so as was done earlier in the 1950s. That is, they would have to communicate through the Kashag rather than go to see him directly as had been happening more recently, and they would have to give advance notice.

---

[53] Stag lha (Taklha) 1995, 273.

[54] Kundeling Dzasa, interview, India, 1992, H.0067.02.

[55] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.06.

[56] Shatra, interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0023.02.

Many of the representatives, especially the mimang's representatives, also said that now we have to make a total break and oppose the Chinese. Captain Kedram recalled that "the mimang at the meeting were saying that we have to fight and make war, and that the Chinese must be expelled. There was a lot of talk like this. And so representatives were talking back and forth. . . . On that day everybody was in a rage." Many were saying things like, "What we want is for Tibet to be Tibet and China to be China." And "from today, Tibet is independent."[57] The explanation of one of the representatives of the clerks reveals how, for many, this was being driven by emotion and desires, not realistic planning,

> Q. You were enthusiastic about fighting the Chinese, but they had many [troops] and many weapons, so what was the strategy you all were thinking about to defeat them?
>
> A. We had no thoughts about this. Tibetans believe in religion, so we trusted that the Three Jewels would show us the way [meaning religion will help to defeat the Chinese]. We thought like that. No one had any thoughts that we were going to lose. . . . We thought we would fight inside Lhasa and then Chushigandru would come in from the outside and we would win. Each household had a plan to move their possessions to a monastery or the Potala temporarily. No one had thoughts of losing this.[58]

Not all assembly members, however, thought that going to war with the PLA in Lhasa made sense. Some Tibetan government officials argued that it was imperative now to reduce the current tension through dialogue, since turning to violence against the Chinese would lead to fighting and killing, and would endanger the Dalai Lama's life. They argued for a focus on repairing relations with the Chinese in order to return to the previous situation before this degenerated into bloody warfare.

Drakten recalled that after a senior aristocratic official, Mingyiling gave a particularly long-winded talk about the historical case for Tibet's independence, going back to past events such as the Sino-Tibetan War of 1912, Tsarong Dzasa, the architect of the famous (failed) modernization movement in the 1912–25 period, spoke up and tried to focus the discussion on what to do about the present crisis,

> "Now, if we talk like that [long-windedly like Mingyiling it will take too long and we don't have time. The Chinese . . . have their hands on the trigger, and the moment they give the order there will be nothing [but bullets]. If we just gather here and give

---

[57] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.06.

[58] Söpel, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0083.01.

> these long speeches, speeches that provide no road [for action], there is no time. Now there are only two things to talk about. Are you going to talk with the Chinese and work things out, or talk about the mimang who have risen up and are saying that the Chinese policy is not good? So since you have revolted, are you going to continue to fight or not! You decide. There is nothing but these two ways. . . . If it is decided in favor of working things out, then hold on to that policy and talk and come to an agreement. If you are going to fight, then decide that and make preparations. Just making long speeches will not help. . . . You must decide on one of these two options. If you want to talk with the Chinese, we don't need to worry about readiness, but if you want to fight, then you have to get the war supplies ready. So decide!" So that is what Tsarong said. . . . [Tsarong also said that] "if we decide to fight, then His Holiness must think about going to India [for his safety]. " So that's what Tsarong said.[59]

Drakten explained what happened next,

> Then there was a Jola (a clerk) named Künsang la. He was known as Kashag edrung Künsang la. All the representatives of the clerks (drungtok) [and the army] discussed among themselves what Tsarong said about the two choices and . . . then Künsang la got up and said, "[We all have] discussed this and we have one firm comment to make: Regarding the question of having discussions with the Chinese, we will on no account accept this. So first, please think about trying to take His Holiness to some European country. Then rather than stay with him [the Chinese], we will conscript all those from age 18–60 and form a mighty military force that will fight until all the men and women are dead and until the hands are lost up to the shoulders. Until we [our goals] are satisfied, we want to do nothing but fight. So from the two policy options that have been pointed out, we the clerks have discussed this and are completely united in thinking that there is no benefit in having talks with the Chinese." Those comments received thunderous applause and the mood was swinging pretty much in that way. It was now coming to the point where they were going to get ready to start making military provisions/preparations.[60]

However, Ta Lama Jawdang, the well-respected senior Trunyichemmo of the Yigtsang Office, the premier office for monk officials, strongly disagreed and tried to tamper down the delegates' eagerness to fight the Chinese (figure 9). Phüntso Yügye, a tea server at the assembly meeting, recalled his speech.

> Jawdang first bowed before the representatives and then said he was going to tell you the Dalai Lama's own orders. He [the Dalai Lama] said all of you should not make a disturbance/uprising (Tib. singja) and all should go home. And when you go back, you should tell other people not to make disturbances/uprisings in Norbulinga. Jawang had tears on his face when he said this. I was right near him and could see

---

[59] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.04 and H.0001.05. Lha klu (Lhalu 1993, 291), however, says Tsarong's comments occurred on the second day of the assembly meeting (the eleventh).

[60] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.04 and H.0001.05.

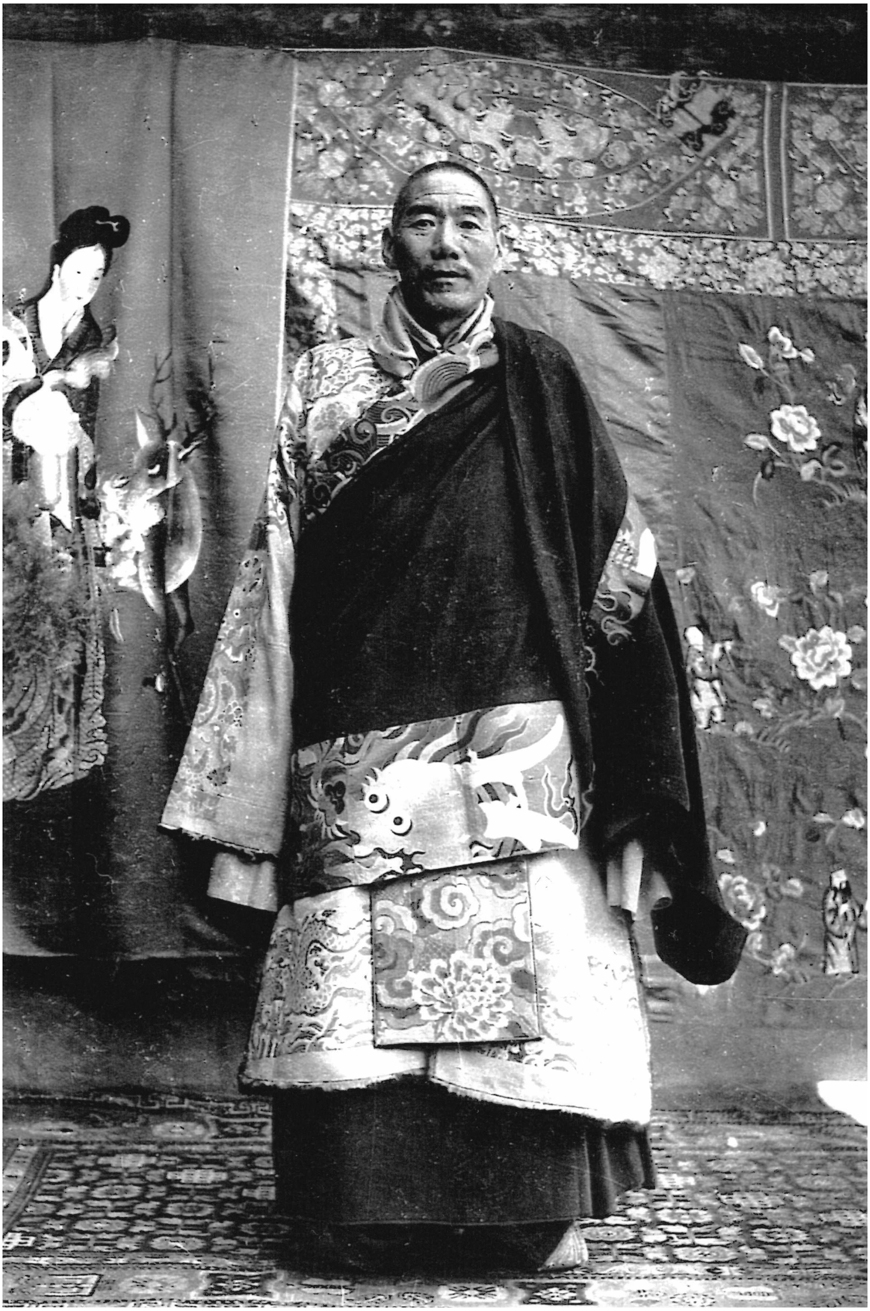


FIGURE 9. Ta Lama Jawdang, 1950s. Courtesy of Jawdang family.

> this. However, the mimang didn't listen. Instead they called out [insultingly], "Ge mabin mashö (Hey you, do not tell lies!). The Dalai Lama didn't say that." No one listened to him.
>
> Manang Abo [a Khamba mimang representative from the Chamdo area] then got up and said, "All of you keep quiet, as I want to say something. Previously, in Kham, there was a famous lama called Dzogchen Pema Rindzin who was taken to a meeting by the Chinese and never returned. We never learned where he had gone to. So today, if the Dalai Lama would have gone to the Military Headquarters, the same would have happened. So we must never accept his going to the Military Headquarters and must oppose this completely." . . .
>
> Q. What did Talama say when Manang Abo was finished?
>
> A. Nothing. But all the representatives were yelling "Yes. That's exactly right."[61]

Following this, Lheding, a monk official who was also one of the four Trunyichemmo as well as the manager of the wealthy Tsomönling Labrang in Lhasa, offered to make all of the wealth of Tsomönling completely available if it is decided to oppose the Chinese. Drakten recalled that Lheding said,

> Now Tsarong has spoken like that and the clerks have also made their comments. If we are going to talk to the Chinese, then all this is unnecessary, right? But if we are going to get war supplies ready and if you are going to think along those lines, then what I want to say is that Tsomönling Labrang has many estates and also many nomad groups. And even in Lhasa we have a lot of stored grain . . . . So I want to say that if you are going to get war supplies ready, Tsomönling Labrang, from whatever estate of ours, and no matter how you want to collect the grain and how you are going to use it, from today on please put it to use in whatever manner you want.[62]

Lheding received a lot of applause and the mood of the representatives again moved toward confronting the Chinese.[63] Nevertheless, at the end of the first day's meeting, the assembly did not reach a consensus about whether to fight or talk, so it was agreed to continue the discussion on the next day at the same venue. However, a few important issues were decided. One of these was to recognize that the mimang should have a role in guarding and defending Norbulinga and the Dalai Lama. This meant that there would be a volunteer mimang guard force at all the doors on the outer wall. However, lay and monk officials would be appointed to head the groups of volunteer guards.[64] Maya, a lay official, said that he was sent to "guard" the west gate where he was in charge of a group of volunteers from Amdo.[65]

---

[61] Phüntso Yügye, interview, India, 1993, H.0033.01.

[62] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0005.04.

[63] Tibetans traditionally clapped to show disapproval, but in the 1950s the Chinese (Western) custom of clapping to show approval came into use at meetings in Lhasa.

[64] Bka zur Kun bde gling (Kundeling) 2000, 185–87.

[65] Maya, interview, India, 1995, H.0039.08.

In addition, monk and lay officials were appointed to serve as extra guards at the gates of the inner, yellow wall.

Another important decision was the creation of a "Command Center" (Tib. gagökang) which would meet in Norbulinga and was to be in charge of the mimang volunteer guards who would be staying to defend the Dalai Lama and Norbulinga.[66] Kundeling Dzasa, who was selected as one of the two top heads of the Command Center by the assembly, explained its functions vis-á-vis the assembly,

> One group [the assembly] would discuss political issues with the Chinese such as whether we are going to talk to them peacefully or are going to fight against them. The other group [the Command Center] would see what should be done with the thousands of people [around Norbulinga] who said that they were going to remain as bodyguards. They said that they did not want salary and would look after themselves, but that would not be sufficient. From this day on, there had to be some channel of communication where orders were sent and requests were heard. And so it was said that a Command Center should be instituted.[67]

Another reason for creating the Command Center was that it was thought that it would not look good if the Chinese saw that the Kashag was directly organizing and supplying the mimang volunteer guards instead of sending them home as the kalöns and Dalai Lama had told the Chinese they would do. This would be seen as further confirmation that the Kashag was really supporting the uprising. One of the officials who was involved explained this as follows, "Now this was started as an emergency measure. It was not that the Kashag and others were not trusted, but rather since they were discussing things with the Chinese, we started this internally to get things prepared. The Kashag had to talk with the Chinese and meet with His Holiness, right? So these activities were put off to one side, and on the other side this [Command Center] was created to get things prepared for war . . . Our job [the Command Center's] was to organize food, and maintain discipline regarding all the soldiers [the armed mimang] who were voluntarily standing around [Norbulinga]. This, therefore, was the Command Center for the Lhasa Uprising."[68] Like the assembly, the Command Center also met in the Shabden Lhagang.

Kundeling added that although the creation of the Command Center was first tasked with organizing the provision of food and supplies for the mimang guards, it also was later used for organizing war provisions .[69] And after a few days, its work came to involve weapons when the Kashag authorized the distribution of government weapons from its armory in the Potala Palace to the mimang and others, such as monks. In fact, many of the officials interviewed called this center the Military Command Center (Tib. magji gagökang) and called the heads of it commanders in chief (Tib. magji).

---

[66] Bka zur Kun bde gling (Kundeling) 2000, 185. This was also sometimes called the "Norling Bodyguard Command Center" [Tib. norling gusung gagökang] and the "People's volunteer military command center" [Tib. mimang tanglangtshö göjü tangdzin gagö magjikang].

[67] Kundeling, interview, India, 1992, H.0067.02.

[68] Ngawang Rigdröl, interview, India, 1994, H.0031.07.

[69] Kundeling, interview, India, 1992. H.0067.02.

Maya, a well-known lay official commented on this military aspect of their work,

> The job of the Command Center was to handle and distribute the arms. It was like a Military Headquarters. . . . Their work was to manage the weapons [Tib. golag dangnyer]; that is, to see who should be given the arms and where to send the people. So it was like making military preparations. So their work had to do with war.[70]

Initially, there were five heads of the Command Center, all of whom were well-known and well-regarded monk and lay officials: Kundeling Dzasa, Khenjung Tara, Khenjung Kelsang Ngawang, Tsipön Shügüpa, and Laja Lheding Sey.[71] In addition to these, there were about fifteen others working at the Command Center.

The relationship between the Kashag, the assembly, and the Command Center is not well understood. It was traditional for the summary recommendations of the assembly to be submitted to the Kashag for review, and it appears that this practice was continued. The following incident, recalled by Kundeling, reveals that the assembly and the Command Center were not completely separate from the Kashag, which was also meeting in Norbulinga. Kundeling said,

> On the 13th of March, the Kashag sent us, the leaders of the Norling Bodyguard Command Headquarters, the following notice,
>
> From among the government officials in charge of the Norling Bodyguard Command Headquarters, because Kundeling Dzasa, Khenjung Tara, Khenjung Kelsang Ngawang, Tsipön Shügüpa, and Lheding Sey have to go to work in the Norling Bodyguard Command Headquarters, they did not also have the time to go as representatives to the assembly meetings. However, since the assembly meetings in Shöl are very important, you people must attend that meeting and new replacements for you as Command Center leaders will be appointed through selection done by the assembly."
>
> We discussed this and confirmed that we will obey that order and from tomorrow, we [five] would attend the assembly meeting. Our replacements were
>
> 1. Kasur [ex-kalön] Lhalu, Tsewang Dorje
> 2. Khenjung Lobsang Tenzin
> 3. Thönpa Khenjung, Jampa Khedrub
> 4. Phala Phogpön, Dorje Wangdü
> 5. Rimshi Shagjang Surpa, Ngawang Gyentsen

---

[70] Maya, interview, India, 1995, H.0039.08.

[71] Bka zur Kun bde gling (Kundeling) 2000, 199–203.

> However, on the next day, when the new heads came to the . . . Command Headquarters and started doing their job, many of the leaders of the people's volunteer guards gathered together and asked why have our old leaders been changed? They said that we, the mimang, do not trust the new leaders. They discussed this and there were different comments, but eventually some of their leaders went to the Kashag and reported that they wanted the Kashag to leave the old leaders in place as before, and that they are unwilling to accept the newly appointed leaders. At the same time, three leaders of the Khamba volunteer guards went directly to see Lhalu, one of the new heads, and told him that the old leaders had been selected by the people, so they must be left as before, so please, you new leaders, go home. . . .
>
> Therefore, that evening, the Kashag sent us a new notice saying that the old leaders of the Norling Bodyguard Command Headquarters do not need to attend the assembly meeting anymore, and you can carry on your duties as before. So we carried on our duties as before.[72]

This incident is revealing, because it shows that the Kashag was clearly still functioning. On the other hand, the appointment issue also reveals that the Kashag was unwilling to impose its will on the mimang. A lot had changed since Barshi's ad hoc assembly meeting had been promptly terminated by the Kashag.

The first day of the assembly had another important outcome. Many representatives, especially those from the mimang, were upset, because there were a number of government officials whose loyalty to the Tibetan government was suspect, since they worked with Chinese in offices or had shown support for the Chinese. They didn't want those people present when serious issues like opposing the Chinese were debated. However, this issue was complicated because, as indicated earlier, after the PCTAR had been inaugurated in 1956, many government officials had been ordered by the Kashag to work in the PCTAR offices. Consequently, most of those officials were working there only because that is where the Kashag deployed them and they were completely loyal to the Tibetan government, where they still held positions. It was decided, therefore, that everyone had to sign an oath of loyalty to Tibet, and those working in the PCTAR had to agree to stop working there and stop taking Chinese salary from tomorrow. And they had to find a guarantor of their loyalty. Since most assembly members wanted to move forward by creating what they were calling a "clean" assembly represented by only "tsamba eaters," the oath was meant to force those who sympathized with China, the "rice eaters," to not participate. There is no copy of that oath, but Kundeling Dzasa recalled that it said something like "We will be unified in working to benefit religion and politics [the dual Tibetan government] and we will put forth all our energy to accomplish this."[73] Shatra, a lay official, added,

---

[72] Ibid., 200–202.

[73] Ibid., 184.

> At the assembly meeting, everyone signed an agreement. All those who had been taking salary from the Chinese would stop, and from now on there would be a separation between the "rice eaters" and "tsamba eaters." For those who signed the oath, there would be no trouble, even though they had worked with Chinese before [in the PCTAR], and had participated/worked in other organizations like the Youth League and the Women's Association. So all people, including me, who said that they will make the break, signed the pledge and got guarantors.[74]

The Tibetan Assembly, therefore, had taken a major step toward tearing up the 17-Point Agreement by now openly saying that no one could be part of the assembly unless they consciously sworn that their allegiance was to Tibet, not China. This was an important step pushing the disturbances further to the level of a conscious uprising against Chinese rule.

Not surprisingly, the Chinese learned of this that same night, and fearing harm might befall the Tibetan officials who were sympathetic to them, told those officials that for their personal safety they should come with their families to stay at the PCTAR building. And for some of the more prominent sympathetic officials like Ngabö who wanted to remain at their homes, the Chinese sent detachments of armed PLA troops to guard them there.[75]

The mimang's representatives, therefore, got some of what they wanted on the first day of the assembly. They were now part of the government's decision-making process and were officially guarding the Dalai Lama's summer palace along with the Tibetan army. On the other hand, they were now more constrained by Tibetan government officials who were chairing the assembly meeting and by many more conservative government officials who were attending and did not agree that military confrontation with the Chinese made sense. So there was no consensus regarding fighting versus talking with the Chinese.

So who were these mimang? The term *mimang* actually was not the traditional Tibet term that was used for the majority of Tibetans who were not elites, that is, those who were not aristocrats or lamas or monastic officials. Traditionally, all these nonelites were referred to as miser (Tib. mi ser). However, when the Chinese communists came onto the scene in 1949–50, Tibetans had to translate the Chinese terms for "the masses" and "the people," so they took the syllable *mang* from the traditional monastic term *tra-mang* [Tib. grwa dmangs], which referred to "common" (*dmangs*) "monks" (*grwa*) and substituted *mi* ("person"), creating the new term *mimang* [Tib. mi dmangs], meaning "common person" or the "masses."[76]

---

[74] Shatra, interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0023.02.

[75] Changkyim, interview, USA, 1995, H.0036.02.

[76] Later, in exile, the term *mang* (Tib. mang), meaning "many," was also used instead of *dmangs* in mimang (Tib. mi mang).

The term *mimang* took on special relevance to Tibetans who opposed the Chinese occupation, because the Chinese were always talking about the importance of the "mimang" in their propaganda and speeches, and it was part of the name of their new state. The Tibetan anti-Chinese elements, therefore, thought that by calling themselves the "Tibetan mimang" they would have greater ability to influence the Chinese to make the changes that they sought. Thus, in 1951–52 and then again in 1956, Tibetan mimang organizations (People's Associations) were formed to try to persuade the Chinese to withdraw their troops from Tibet in the name of the "Tibetan people."

However, the leaders of these "people's organizations" were not really from the masses in the communist sense, since they were mostly from a middle stratum of Tibetans situated between the elite and the common people. These middle stratum individuals consisted of stewards and managers working for aristocrats and labrangs, as well as traders and minor officials in the government, such as clerks. And unlike the overwhelming numbers of the real Tibetan masses, they were literate and knew many government officials due to their work for the elite. In fact, many of the activists in the 1952 and 1956 People's Associations, were also the activists in 1959.[77] However, there was a major difference between the people's associations in 1952 and 1956 and the mimang in 1959. In 1952 and 1956, these middle-level individuals first met secretly and then consciously organized an association to influence the Chinese. In 1959, however, initially there was only an unorganized demonstration of Lhasa residents, most of whom were, in fact, actual common folk. However, when it came time to select representatives for the assembly from this huge number of demonstrators, almost all those chosen were from that middle stratum of Tibetans.

It should be noted that in addition to the regular Lhasa residents, there were also many Khamba refugees from Sichuan living in Lhasa who had either come after Chushigandru moved to Lhoka in June 1958 or had decided not to move with Chushigandru. Unlike the normal Lhasa mimang, they were armed, so they became an important component in guarding Norbulinga and later setting up roadblocks and so forth.

While the events of 10 March were unfolding, that evening the Dalai Lama unexpectedly received a letter from Tan Guansan, the acting head of the TWC. This began a famous exchange of six letters between the two over the next week.

THE EARLY LETTERS OF TAN GUANSAN AND THE DALAI LAMA

After Gadrang phoned Li Zuomin and explained that the Dalai Lama was unable to attend the performance, the Chinese side decided it would be beneficial to maintain good ties with the Dalai Lama and to convey that they were not angry by having Tan Guansan send the Dalai Lama a friendly and understanding letter. Li Zuomin composed and translated this letter and also arranged for its secret delivery to the Dalai Lama. He explained,

---

[77] Maya, interview, India, 1995, H.0039.09.

> I wrote the letter in Chinese and showed it to the Political Commissar [Tan], who made some changes to several words, and then I wrote it in Tibetan and showed it to Ngabö to check whether it was written in accordance with the norms, because letters to the Dalai Lama had to be written very carefully. After he made some corrections to the wording and so forth, I made a clean copy. Then it had to be sent, but who should go to deliver it? This was my duty, since the Political Commissar had said, "Since you are familiar with all the officials of the local Tibetan government, you must find a reliable person who can go to deliver the letter and send it through him. So I called Gyamtsoling [Rinpoche] who . . . was the Dalai Lama's lead debating partner (Tib. tsenshab) [and the vice-chairman of the Tibet Branch of China Buddhist Association], and was someone I knew very well. He was a lama, but he had a great sense of humor when he talked with laymen.
>
> I told him, "Rinpoche, I am in a difficult situation, can you please help me?" He said, "Go ahead and tell me what it is." Then I told him, "This is a letter from the Political Commissar to be sent to the Dalai Lama." . . . "Please deliver this letter to the Dalai Lama by your own hand and please be very careful. Do not deliver it through anybody else. And especially, let alone delivering it through Phala Thubten Wönden, do not even let him know about it. You are a tsenshab, so please deliver it in person." He had the authority to go to the Dalai Lama's residence.
>
> I also told him, "If you are able to deliver it by your own hand, you must send me a message [that this was done]. And then we talked about how to send such a message. . . . We decided, in accordance with his own idea, that if he could deliver the letter, he will return his pass [for the earlier show] back to me and then I could relax as this will be the sign that he was able to deliver the letter to the Dalai Lama's hand. He said, "I am doing this because perhaps I won't be able to come out [again from Norbulinga]. So if you don't receive my pass by around 8–9 P.M., this means I couldn't deliver the letter and I will burn it."
>
> Q. Did Rinpoche know the content of the letter?
>
> A. Yes, I showed the letter to him. I didn't keep it a secret from him because there wasn't anything secret in it. He said, "The letter is written very nicely. Political Commissar Tan is really a great person."[78]

Gyamtsoling Rinpoche's recollections of this were published in an interview in China in 1995.

> Jiacuolin [that is the Chinese pronunciation of Gyamtsoling] Rinpoche said he went to Norbulinga from his home on horseback. On the way to Norbulinga, in the area from the Potala Palace west to Norbulinga, he saw that there were lots of armed rebels here and there, who were encircling Norbulinga. Jiacuolin Rinpoche said that

---

[78] Li Zuomin, interview, Beijing, 2011. H.0053.06.

> the gate to Norbulinga was closed then . . . and there were many rebels inside Norbulinga. Jiacuolin said that he gave General Tan Guansan's letter to the Dalai Lama in the Dagden Palace.[79] He says: "I met the Dalai Lama in one room on the left side of this building. The Dalai Lama looked very worried. He was sitting in a chair and holding his forehead in his hands. He said, "I reported to the Dalai Lama that I had been to the Military Headquarters and have brought one letter written by Tan Guansan for him. After reading the letter, the Dalai Lama said to me very worriedly, "They (referring to the rebels) claim they do these things in order to protect me, yet actually they are doing harm to me." The Dalai Lama asked me, "It is said that Phagpalha Khenjung was beaten to death. Do you know the reason why he was killed?' The Dalai Lama also asked me whether or not I had the courage to go to the Military District once again and to report the entire situation, both the inside and outside situation, to the officials of the Military Headquarters."
>
> Jiacuolin Rinpoche said that he planned to leave Norbulinga at 6:00 P.M. that afternoon to report the situation to the Military Headquarters just as the Dalai Lama had asked, but after leaving the Dalai Lama, the rebels did not permit him to go outside Norbulinga. Since those rebels were standing guard all over Norbulinga, he had to send an 18-years old boy named Temba who was following him around then, to go to the PCTAR and give them his show ticket . . . Jiacuolin Rinpoche says that the boy hid the show ticket in his hat, and although the rebels searched him at the Norbulinga gate when he was leaving, they did not find it.[80]

The letter from Tan Guansan was short but conveyed a supportive and friendly attitude, although it also made it seem as if the decision to cancel the visit had been made by the Chinese side.

> March 10, 1959
>
> Respected Dalai Lama
>
> It is very good indeed that you wanted to come to the Military Area Command. You are heartily welcome [to come and visit]. But since the intrigues and provocations of the reactionaries have caused you very great difficulties, it may be advisable that for the time being you do not come.
>
> *Salutations and best regards,*
> *Tan Kuan-san*[81]

The letter was unexpected good news for the Dalai Lama/Kashag, since its tone seemed to confirm the Kashag's impression that the Chinese were going to wait to see what the Dalai Lama and the Kashag did. The Dalai Lama responded quickly, sending a letter to Tan the next day that was hoped would further persuade the

---

[79] The Dagden phodrang was the newest palace in Norbulinga. It was built in 1956–57.

[80] In Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuan hui 1995, 196–97.

[81] *Peking Review* 13 (31 March 1959): 10. Tan Kuan-san is the older Chinese romanization for Tan Guansan.

Chinese that the uprising was not the Dalai Lama's doing, nor did he support it. In this letter, cited below, the Dalai Lama was clearly trying to project the persona of a "progressive," in order to calm the anger of the Chinese about this volatile situation.

> March 11, 1959
>
> Dear Comrade Political Commissar Tan:
>
> I intended to go to the Military Area Command [Headquarters] to see the theatrical performance yesterday, but I was unable to do so, because of obstruction by people, lamas and laymen, who were instigated by a few evil elements and who did not know the facts; this has put me to indescribable shame. I am greatly upset and worried and at a loss as to what to do. I was immediately greatly delighted when your letter . . . appeared before me [and learned that] you do not mind at all.
>
> Reactionary, evil elements are carrying out activities endangering me under the pretext of ensuring my safety. *I am taking measures to calm things down. In a few days when the situation becomes stable,* I will certainly meet you. If you have any internal directives for me, please communicate them frankly through this messenger (this refers to Ngapo Ngawang-Jigme—Ed.).
>
> *Dalai Lama*
> *written by my own hand*[82]

Meanwhile, also on 11 March, the assembly meeting convened for a second session in the Shabden Lhagang hall in Norbulinga.

THE SECOND ASSEMBLY MEETING

On the second day of the assembly, Kundeling Dzasa told the representatives that Kundeling Labrang, like Tsomönling Labrang, would provide whatever supplies it possessed to help the cause. The Command Center, therefore, now had plenty of food and other nonmilitary supplies, so even if fighting broke out and they couldn't leave Norbulinga, they would be okay regarding supplies.[83]

The assembly also continued on the eleventh to address the core issue of whether they should fight or talk to the Chinese. Lhalu recalled that people were saying things like "We want to be independent" and "We should rise up and we are willing to sacrifice our lives." Lhalu said that most of the mimang's comments were made by about eight of the mimang representatives such as Manang Abo, Könchog Rinchen (the Chandzö of the Yabshi family), and especially Shölpa Tatonga, who was a very eloquent speaker. Lhalu disagreed with their view and said that he thought their call to fight the Chinese was reckless, because Tibetans would certainly lose if they tried to fight them openly. He argued that rather than engage in open warfare, they should try to work behind the scenes and use guile to influence the Chinese for Tibet's benefit. He used a common Tibetan saying to convey his approach: "Take the egg without scaring the chicken."[84]

---

[82] Ibid., 10–11 (emphasis added). The Dalai Lama has said that the letters were mostly composed by the Kashag, and especially by Kalön Surkhang. Dalai Lama, comment to author, 2005.

[83] Kundeling, interview, India, 1992, H.0067.02.

Lhalu's comments were supported by Ta Lama Jawdang, who as mentioned earlier, was the senior head of the Yigtsang Office, and the head of the Dalai Lama's Nangmagang. He said, "Lhalu's comments are good. It would be very dangerous for us to fight the Chinese. If they really fired many cannons at us, we would get scattered like beans."[85] Despite this, Lhalu said that most of the mimang representatives continued to be in favor of fighting the Chinese. But it was not just the mimang's representatives who were saying this. Drakten recalled one instance when he personally heard Phala say that now was the time for fighting, not talking.

> So the meeting was discussing whether we are going to talk with the Chinese or fight them, and the mood was swinging towards having discussions with the Chinese. The idea was to take action [to talk] soon, because once the trigger is pulled [by the Chinese], then there will be nothing to talk about. So the mood of the meeting was swinging in favor of discussions with the Chinese.
>
> At this junction Chemmo [Phala] said, "If the assembly's representatives open negotiations/relations [Tib. drewa] with the Chinese, I am not going to stay here and serve. I will leave straight for Lhoka." So this is what he was thinking. Like Namseling, he was thinking of going to Lhoka and fighting. The Chinese side is already branding us as reactionaries . . . so if something was worked out with the Chinese, then, gradually we would be left out, like what happened to the two Sitsab.[86] Anyway, Chemmo risked all saying that if the situation arises where there will be discussions with the Chinese, then I'm leaving for Lhoka.[87]

Consequently, the events of 10 March had placed the Kashag and the Dalai Lama in a difficult situation vis-á-vis the Chinese. They had informed the Chinese that they were going to handle the disturbances and disperse the demonstrators, but instead, Norbulinga had actually become the center for anti-Chinese activities (in Chinese terms, "reactionary activities"). By not taking firm action to disperse the demonstrators on the tenth or even the eleventh, they had emboldened them. Now they were worried that the Chinese might suddenly decide to suppress the nascent uprising and open fire with artillery at Norbulinga, which was the center of the uprising. Any such step, obviously, would place the Dalai Lama's life in enormous danger. Consequently, the Kashag, Phala, and Gadrang decided that they had to move the assembly meeting out of Norbulinga.[88] However, because it was not certain that the mimang representatives would obey the Kashag, they asked the Dalai Lama to give this order to them in person. The Dalai Lama, therefore, summoned the assembly members and told them that from now on it would be better for them to move the assembly meeting to the Shöl Parkhang (the printing house in Shöl).[89] The Dalai Lama recalled this,

---

[84] In Tibetan: bya ma 'drogs pa'i 'og nas sgo nga lon thabs bya dgos.

[85] Lhalu, interview, Lhasa, 1993, H.0002.02.

[86] As discussed in chapter 2, the Sitsab were told by the Dalai Lama to retire from their powerful position of acting prime ministers due to their continuous fighting with the Chinese leaders in 1951–52.

[87] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.04.

> I called them [the assembly representatives] to the big hall at the New Palace [Tib. phodrang sarpa], and I told them that if you all stay grouped together here at Norbulingka it is very dangerous, so do not stay like this. It is completely unnecessary (to stay like this). Previously the Kashag has told you that it is better if you all go to your own places [homes]. Just leave a few necessary representatives here. Staying like this is not good. It won't be of any help. Poor things. So it was said that it was not good to stay like this, and so it [the assembly meeting] was moved to Shöl.[90]

The mimang went to meet in Shöl the next day but insisted on keeping their armed volunteer guards at Norbulinga, and so continued to control everyone's entrance to and exit from it. According to the Dalai Lama, they even took steps to prevent the kalöns from leaving Norbulinga,

> By the . . . eleventh of March, it was clear that the Lhasa people were becoming even more difficult to control. On that day they posted six guards near the Cabinet (Kashag's) office inside Norbulingka and warned the ministers that they would not be allowed to leave. Presumably they suspected that the Cabinet might make some kind of compromise with the Chinese and so defeat the popular demand that the Chinese should leave Tibet.[91]

Moving the assembly on the third day to Shöl reduced the risk of the Chinese shelling Norbulinga, since it was no longer the heart of the uprising and also, as will be seen in a later section, allowed the Dalai Lama to exaggerate a little and tell the Chinese that he had done something to disband the assembly. However, the Chinese had a large spy network in Lhasa, so it would not take them long to learn that the assembly had not been disbanded, *but only shifted.* Consequently, this was obviously not a meaningful solution to the serious problem that the Dalai Lama and the Kashag were facing with the Chinese, but it was hoped it would buy the Kashag some time.

---

[88] Lhautara, interview, India, 1992. H.0021.02.

[89] Kundeling Dzasa, interview, India, 1992. H.0067.02. Shöl was the small, walled village immediately below the Potala.

[90] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.

[91] Ta la'i bla ma (Dalai Lama) 1963, 188.

Coming on top of the still intractable Chushigandru problem, these developments with the mimang in Lhasa led Phala and Surkhang to conclude that since the chaotic and dangerous situation in Lhasa could not be rectified by them, it would be safest to move the Dalai Lama as soon as possible to safety in Lhoka, and then, if need be, to India.

At this point, the Kashag contacted Ngabö for advice, since they thought, correctly, that he would understand best what the Chinese were thinking. He was then living at home, so the Kashag (the three other kalöns in Norbulinga) sent Gyegyepa, the Kashag's secretary, there to deliver a letter addressed to him. Gyegyepa recalled his visit and Ngabö's response,

> The message I delivered said, "The Dalai Lama has sent the assembly out of Norbulinga and the Kashag is doing whatever it can to calm the disturbance/uprising. So we want to know what your thoughts and advice are." . . .
>
> Ngabö, however, replied vaguely using a dense metaphor, "This situation is very bad, but the Dalai Lama's order [re the assembly] is very good. However, no matter how much you hit a solid thing, it is extremely difficult to break it into small pieces/granules. It will be good if [the Dalai Lama] explains every issue, one by one, and then gives the instructions."[92]
>
> [Then] he gave me a khatag scarf to present to the Dalai Lama and said, "I can't come today [to the office], and I will be taking a week's leave of absence." I told the Kashag exactly what Ngabö said.[93]

Ngabö's comments are unclear, but he was apparently warning his Kashag colleagues that they could not defeat China ["the solid thing"], and was warning them to tell the Dalai Lama that he should examine each and every relevant factor carefully before giving any orders. Basically, Ngabö general advice was not to try to fight the Chinese, which meant they should act to control the mimang.

THE SHÖL ABBREVIATED ASSEMBLY

On the third day of the uprising, 12 March, a smaller assembly called the Tibetan Abbreviated Assembly [Tib. tsondu hragdu] met in the printing house in Shöl. Its representatives had been chosen by the Large Assembly the previous day and consisted of only about eighty people, all of whom were completely "tsamba eaters." In other words, all the officials with questionable sympathies had been excluded. In addition, as Phüntso Yügye, one of the tea servers, explained, they had taken other measures to maintain secrecy and exclude spies.

---

[92] In Tibetan: rdog rdog gcig gi sgang la ga tshad gzhus na yang, de sil bur ha cang 'gro khag po red 'di tsho mire ngo re gnas don bkrol byas bka' slob gnang na yag po yod red.

[93] Gyegyepa, interview, Lhasa, 1992. H.0011.02.

> There were Trapchi Regiment soldiers on guard outside, and when we served tea to the delegates, they stopped talking for secrecy. We could go back and forth because we had an identification badge (a strip of cloth with a notch on bottom) that we wore.[94]

However, while the venue was different and the security was good, the topics were the same—they were still talking about whether to fight with the Chinese or try to hold talks with them. Moreover, it was hard to discuss important issues with all eighty delegates and have time for each member to speak, so the Abbreviated Assembly broke itself down into smaller breakout groups (Tib. tsogchung), one of which was tasked with looking into documents to demonstrate that Tibet was independent. Maya was part of that tsogchung and recalled that his subgroup was discussing a nonviolent approach to the Chinese,

> It was said that we needed to have a statement for the Chinese, so a tsogchung was made for this. . . . It was headed by Tsarong Sawangchemmo, and there also were quite a few of us there. I too was selected for this subgroup. We met in another room, the Jigje Lhagang, and we produced a statement which began by discussing the way the Chinese first came and what they had said at that time. All there was for us to do was to examine what the Chinese said. There was not much talk about independence and so forth, because the Seventeen-Point Agreement had been implemented. So this was being done from a peaceful perspective. This statement began by saying that such and such a situation has arisen and the Dalai Lama, who the Tibetan people considered like their own lives, is now in danger and it will not do for him to be taken to China. Now the situation had come to a head wherein we, the Tibetan people, have to express our concerns to the Chinese and whatever China needs to say, we need to discuss this peacefully. Whatever hopes we the people have, we will express. So we were saying that discussions need to take place peacefully. . . . We [this subgroup] met continuously and tried to foster peaceful discussions.[95]

Laja Tempa recalled the more militant side, "There was an Abbreviated Assembly meeting at which some said that they were going to be in charge of the military salary. Others were appointed as military commanders in chief [Tib. magji]. . . . They also arranged for some people to look at the documents that showed that Tibet was completely independent. . . . We were discussing things at the meetings and consulting with the Kashag at the same time. The meetings didn't make decisions on their own."[96]

Another government monk official, Changkyim, said that "Tsarong Dzasa [Sawangchemmo] argued that we, the anti-Chinese elements, should not stay inside [Lhasa], because if we do that we can all be destroyed with one volley. So we all have to move outside [of Lhasa] and make it appear that there is nothing against the Chinese that is going on here. He made an excellent suggestion, but when he said that, others responded saying, 'Oh! Suggesting that His Holiness and all should leave Lhasa and go outside is not at all suitable.' So they never followed his suggestion. . . . These objections came mainly from the mimang representatives".[97] And, of course, changing the venue to Shöl had no effect on the presence of a large number of armed mimang volunteer guards at Norbulinga and did not change the fact that the new Command Center remained there. Nor did it have any effect on the activities of the mimang outside of Norbulinga and Shöl. For example, there was a large women's demonstration on the twelfth and thirteenth that, among other places, went to the Indian Consulate to protest. Prime Minister Nehru later commented on this, saying that the Consul General in Lhasa reported to Delhi that on the fourteenth [he had the wrong date],

---

[94] Phüntso Yügye, interview, India, 1993, H.0033.01. Trindor, a Lhasan, said that Norbulinga had the same identification system and used the same badge.

[95] Maya, interview, India, 1995, H.0039.08.

[96] Laja Tempa, interview, India, 1993, H.0018.03.

> a crowd of 5,000 Tibetan women had come to the Consulate General with the same kind of complaints and asked him to accompany them to the Chinese Foreign Office in Lhasa to bear witness to what they said. At that, again, the poor Consul General was exceedingly embarrassed. It was none of his business to do this and he said: "I cannot go." Nehru added, "Quite rightly. He reported it to us. We drafted a message—it was kept ready to be sent—to say: 'Don't get entangled in what has happened and was happening in Lhasa.'"[98]

While most of the mimang favored rising up against the Chinese/PLA in Lhasa, the Kashag saw this as dangerously unrealistic; it was certain to result in heavy loss of life and property, endanger the life and safety of the Dalai Lama, and in the end, was most likely to fail, end Tibet's internal autonomy, and precipitate democratic reforms. Since the Tibetan army would have had to play a central role in any offensive attack on the Chinese garrisons and office compounds in Lhasa, it is not surprising that the Tibetan government, the Kashag, understood that it was essential to maintain discipline and control over the troops in its four regiments in Lhasa, and it did that successfully. Consequently, few if any of the roughly 2,500 Tibetan army soldiers deserted to join the March 10th uprising, nor had any army units defected to join Chushigandru in Lhoka—with one small, but interesting, exception at the end of 1958.

Within the activist anti-Chinese officials in the Tibetan government, there was concern that there were not enough Chushigandru fighters to confront the Chinese effectively all over Tibet, so moving forward, it would be crucial to recruit, train, and arm large numbers of Central Tibetan rural peasants as militia to fight together with Chushigandru. As has been discussed, one of Namseling's goals in Lhoka was to raise and arm 10,000 recruits from local Tibetans living there.

---

[97] Changkyim, interview, USA, 1995, H.0036.02.

[98] "Prime Minister Nehru's reply to the debate in the Rayja Sabha on 4 May 1959," cited in Sen 1960, 198–99.

Another similar plan was implemented a few months after the Namseling mission by a clique of Army officers and government officials that included Tashi Bera (the Trapchi regiment's commander), Commander-in-chief Jangchenlokho Lokela, and some lower army officers like Captain Kedram. They arranged to send covertly to Lhoka a platoon of Tibetan army troops under a lieutenant [Tib. shengo] named Namgyal Wangdü together with a former monk official named Lobsang Yeshe. Their main task was to make contact with Chushigandru in Lhoka, and then move on to Tsang province where they would begin to recruit thousands of local Tsangpa Tibetans to form a new militia who would be trained by the army troops. When this was completed, the plan was to arm them with weapons from the government arsenal in Lhasa and have them fight with Chushigandru.

However, there was an important second aim for the army group: to improve Khamba-Tibetan relations by ending abuses. Barshi, the activist monk official, explained this aspect of the covert army mission:

> From among the Tibetans, many people went out and are engaged in guerrilla warfare. However, among them, there are some fake people sent by the Chinese. Actually, there should be good friendship among the guerrilla fighters and the people in order to strengthen our force, but on the contrary, they robbed horses and grain and raped women. Therefore, many people regarded them even worse than the Chinese. So we must clean up the people sent by the Chinese and educate our people who have made some mistakes. . . . We must have good friendship between the guerrilla fighters and people, and we must form a united front of soldiers and people. . . . The late Lobsang Yeshe was capable and very good in making connections with people, so we decided to send him to Chushigandru to take on this the task because he was the right person. . . . Our purpose was to send Lobsang Yeshe to Chushigandru to overcome the Khambas' errors.[99]

Namgyal Wangdü led that platoon, and, as cited in chapter 10, explained his mission,

> I was the Army officer who got to go. I was a shengo, and there was another shengo who I took along. I took about 30 soldiers, fully armed with 2 Bren guns. Along with Lobsang Yeshe and some Amdowas, I also had some Khambas from Tsawarong and Jüba. So we secretly left Lhasa.
>
> The plan was for us to go to Lhoka and make connections with Andru Jinda [Gombo Tashi] and then, after laying out our plans, we were to start recruiting [and training] militias in Tsang Province. Leaving from Lhasa, . . . we got to Gonggar, which was south of the Yarlungtsangpo River, where we encountered some Chushigandru people like Jangri Lhagye and Litang Kunga Samden. They said that Gombo Tashi was in Powo and

---

[99] Bar zhi rtse mgron (Barshi) n.d., 32–34.

> Kongpo, but it is said that he will be arriving soon, so please stay here in the meantime. Since we were supposed to make connections with him, we decided to wait there.
>
> Lobsang Yeshe sent a letter through two persons [to Gombo Tashi] saying that we have arrived and that this is our plan and work, and we wish to discuss this with you so it would be good if you could come soon to the southern area. His reply said that he was going to come soon, so we stayed there for what ended up being 2–3 months.
>
> While we were staying there, we sent out letters to villagers in nearby areas like Chushul, Nyetang and Tsang, and as a result, about 100 volunteer militia arrived . . . one by one. . . . However, since we were waiting for Gombo Tashi, we couldn't leave for Tsang.
>
> In the meantime, at Tsetang, at Gangbu, . . . fighting was taking place daily, since Chushigandru had launched an attack there [on 25 January]. Some of our soldiers had training and experience in warfare, so they asked [us for help] and I sent about 10–15 soldiers who stayed there [at Gangbu] until the 1959 fighting began. I still had some troops and some of the rural militia with me, along with Lobsang Yeshe. Later, about 50–60 Amdowas who wanted Lobsang Yeshe to be their leader joined us, so we were all there together. While we were waiting for Gombo Tashi to return, the uprising took place in Lhasa on March 10th and everything changed.[100]

TAN GUANSAN'S SECOND LETTER TO THE DALAI LAMA

Back in Lhasa, on the twelfth, the same day that the Shöl Assembly held its first meeting, the Dalai Lama received a second letter from Tan Guansan (that was dated the eleventh). It was markedly less friendly and more threatening. It now told the Dalai Lama that the mimang were no longer just blocking Norbulinga *but were now seriously disrupting the national defense highway.*

> Letter to the Dalai Lama from General Tan Kuan-san
>
> March 11, 1959
>
> The reactionaries have now become so audacious that they have openly and arrogantly carried out military provocations. They have erected fortifications and posted large numbers of machine guns and armed reactionaries along the national defense highway (the highway north of the Norbu Linka), thereby seriously disrupting the security of national defense communications.
>
> On many occasions in the past, we have told the Kashag that the People's Liberation Army is duty bound to defend the country and to ensure the protection of communications related to national defense; it certainly cannot remain indifferent to this serious act of military provocation. The Tibet Military Area Command has sent letters, therefore, to Surkong [Surkhang], Neusha [Liushar], Shasu [Shasur]

---

[100] Namgyal Wangdü, interview, India, 1993, H.0020.02.

> and Pala [Phala] asking them to tell the reactionaries to remove all the fortifications they have set up and to withdraw from the highway immediately. Otherwise, they themselves will have to take full responsibility for the serious consequences. I want to inform you of this. Please let me know what your views are at your earliest convenience.
>
> *Salutations and best regards,*
> *Tan Kuan-san*
> *March 11, 1959*[101]

Tan Guansan's response, therefore, was a warning that the situation on the ground had taken a serious negative turn and the PLA would have to deal with the new "military provocations" on the Qinghai-Lhasa national highway if the Dalai Lama/ Kashag itself did not themselves take action. The seriousness of this issue can be seen by the fact that the Chinese Military Headquarters had also sent letters to the kalöns and to Phala about this. And ominously, it stated that the PLA "certainly cannot remain indifferent to this serious act of military provocation." Nevertheless, it still held out a hand to the Dalai Lama by ending not with an ultimatum, but by informing him of these circumstances and asking him to "please let me know what your views are at your earliest convenience."

There is no copy of the letter Tan sent to the kalöns and Phala, but the Dalai Lama has described its contents.

> The letter to the Cabinet [Kashag] . . . said that the rebels had put up barricades on the north side of Lhasas on the road towards China, and told the Cabinet to order them removed at once. It warned the Cabinet that if this was not done, "serious consequences would follow, for which the responsibility would rest on Surkhang, Liushar, Shasur and Dronyerchemmo [Phala] [for failing to deal with the mimang].
>
> The Cabinet sent for the leaders of the people again and advised them to remove the barricades so that the Chinese could not find an excuse in them for more repression. But that advice had exactly the wrong effect. The leaders absolutely refused to demolish the barricades. They said they had put them there to protect Norbulingka by keeping Chinese reinforcements out of the city, and if the Chinese wanted them removed, the obvious conclusion was that they meant *to attack the palace and capture the Dalai Lama.* They also said that the Chinese themselves had put up barricades in front of the temple and taken similar precautions to protect their Tibetan supporters such as Ngabo [at his house]. If the Chinese could use barricades to protect Ngabo, they asked, why should they object to the people of Lhasa protecting the palace? This was unfortunate logic, but the leaders could not be persuaded to see the Chinese orders in any other way; and the unhappy result was that they became more apprehensive about my safety and refused to disperse the crowd. The people became more uncompromising, appointed six commanders from among themselves to

---

[101] *Peking Review* 13 (31 March 1959): 10–11.

> strengthen the defense of the Palace, and announced they would not leave the Palace unguarded whatever happened.[102]

The mimang's refusal to obey the Kashag's order pushed Sino-Tibetan relations further along its dangerous downward trajectory, and added urgency to Phala and Surkhang's conclusion that the only answer was to get the Dalai Lama to leave Lhasa as soon as possible. This led to the State Oracle being summoned to give a prophecy about whether the Dalai Lama should stay. The Dalai Lama recalled,

> It was around this point that I consulted the Nechung oracle, which was hurriedly summoned. Should I stay or should I try to escape? What was I to do? The oracle made it clear that I should stay and keep open the dialogue with the Chinese. For once, I was unsure of whether this really was the best course of action. I was reminded of Lukhangwa's remark about the gods lying when they too became desperate. So I spent the afternoon performing *Mo,* another form of divination. The result was identical.[103]

In response to Tan Guansan's letter that was received on the twelfth, the Dalai Lama sent a second letter to Tan Guansan, in which he tried to calm the Chinese and preclude them launching any attacks by presenting himself as in sync with the Chinese understanding of the situation. For example, he talked about the "illegal activities of the reactionaries."

> Dear Comrade Political Commissar Tan,
>
> I suppose you have received my letter of yesterday (March 11-Ed.) forwarded to you by Ngapo. I have received the letter you sent me this morning. The unlawful activities of the reactionary clique caused me endless worry and sorrow. Yesterday, I told the Kashag to order the immediate dissolution of the illegal People's Conference, and the immediate withdrawal of the reactionaries who arrogantly moved into the Norbu Linka under the pretext of protecting me. As to the incidents of yesterday and the day before, which were brought about under the pretext of ensuring my safety and have seriously estranged relations between the Central People's Government and the local government, I am making every possible effort to deal with them. At 8:30 Peking time this morning, *a few Tibetan army men suddenly fired several shots near the Qinghai-Tibet highway.* Fortunately, no serious disturbance occurred. As to the questions mentioned in your letter (referring to the letter of the 11th sent by General Tan Kuen-san to the Dalai Lama, Ed.), I am planning to persuade a few subordinates and give them instructions.
>
> Please communicate to me frankly any instructive opinions you have for me.
>
> *The Dalai Lama, March 12*[104]

---

[102] Dalai Lama 1977, 188–89.

[103] Dalai Lama 1990, 135.

[104] *Peking Review* 13 (31 March 1959): 10–11 (emphasis added).

In this letter, the Dalai Lama mentions Tibetan soldiers firing shots on the main northern highway and indicated he understood that the events of the past two days "had seriously strained the relations" between Beijing and Lhasa, but he also tried to be upbeat by conveying to the Chinese that he had already taken concrete steps to end the disturbances/uprising by asking the Kashag to "order the People's Association to disband, and all reactionaries who are in Norbulingka . . . to leave." And he ended saying he was planning to advise several subordinates about the issues that Tan Guansan had raised.

Of course, the Dalai Lama had not ordered the assembly to disband, had done nothing to end the uprising, and the progressive language that was used did not represent what he really thought. The Dalai Lama explained in his autobiography that the letters "were meant to disguise my real intentions."[105]

At the same time, the mimang security guards were complaining they could not adequately defend the Dalai Lama at Norbulinga without better weapons, so they pushed the Kashag to give them weapons from the Tibetan government's armory in the Potala Palace. The Kashag and Dalai Lama initially did not want to provide these, but since the Chinese side was reinforcing their positions, they yielded and, as mentioned earlier, let the Command Center manage these weapons. The monk official Dombor was working in the Command Center and recalled being ordered to move the weapons from the armory in the Potala to Norbulinga. He explained the operation,

> A. We had to take charge of the guns. The Bren guns had to be assembled and the new ones had to be boiled, and things like that. They had started the Command Center and so they were telling us [to distribute them]. . . .
>
> Q: So when the guns and ammunitions were brought from the Potala, who did the work?
>
> A: They would send them from the (Tibetan) Military Headquarters and deposit them where we were.
>
> Q: These guns had been locked up for a long time so were they working?
>
> A: . . . All the rifles were working. There were a lot of new Bren guns.
>
> Q: New?
>
> A: Still unpacked. But there were also many that were already out [unpacked]. . . . The new ones were greased and in boxes. And in order to take them out, they had to be boiled and then assembled. . . . They were covered with that [grease].[106]

Giving arms to the mimang, however, was problematic, since they had no training and were under no strict command structure, so there was a danger some would use them not just for defense but to fire at the Chinese. Concerns over this can be seen by the Ta Lama, Jawdang's comments. One day, after he left the Trungja tea ceremony, he went to where the guns were being collected near the Shabden Lhagang [in Norbulinga] . . . and with the help of his servants, got up on a raised area and with his two hands folded together [in a gesture of supplication], he warned those who were getting the weapons not to thoughtlessly start a battle with the PLA that we will lose. Drakten recalled his comments,

---

[105] Dalai Lama 1977, 188.

[106] Dombor, Ngawang Retro, interview, India, 1993, H.0031.04.

> You, the mimang, have such determination. If there is anything called a good intention that is whiter than a conch shell, this is it. At such a dangerous time for religion and politics and for the bodily safety of His Holiness, for you, the miming, to volunteer with such determination is just astonishing. Such determination is something that is whiter than the snow-capped mountains. However, just now, even though the arms are being distributed, *the way to use them is to use them when the order is given to you and not to just shoot unnecessarily when you are provoked or if you see a Chinese somewhere.* Such actions will not at all be tolerated, Since these arms are being given to those who have no military training, this is the reason for such a statement.
>
> Many Chinese are moving about in the Kyangthang Naga area, so just thinking that you can go to where they are and start shooting at them [is bad] because they will say that the Tibetans raised their hands first and were the first to shoot. Do not forget that the Chinese are ready to pull the trigger and they will have no difficulty doing that. If they begin firing from all directions, there will be clouds of dust so that you will have difficulty even seeing each other and all you will manage to do is to say, "Now what." "Now what to do!" That's all that will be left to say. And His Holiness will still be here, so how are you going to guarantee his safety. Also, how are you going to challenge them, since they are fully trained soldiers who have surrounded us and have all their arms and ammunition ready to use. So as for us, the moment we get arms, we should not cause any commotion. As I have said, your intentions and determination are whiter than the snow-capped mountains, but "thought" (Tib. sampa) and "action" (Tib. jewa) must be in agreement, otherwise even if you have good intentions you can create a blunder. So with both thumbs [he made a begging sign], I ask you, the mimang, to be most watchful and careful, because the safety of His Holiness is at risk."
>
> After he said that, he got down and immediately the representatives started bickering and shouting, "Yes. These guys [the older government officials] are really something. They are still talking like that." And others began shouting at the Ta Lama, "Still talking like that?" So he just left quietly. So the time had already arrived for saying things against the government officials, but what Dombor [*sic*, Ta Lama] said was absolutely true and extremely useful to guide and advise them at a time when the situation was grave. Later when they really started firing and the place became a cloud of dust, one began to think, "Oh! people like Dombor [*sic*, Ta Lama], although they did not have a view [supernatural] into the future, it was as if they did have one, and having used their wisdom, it seemed like they knew things before they happened.[107]

---

[107] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.08.

Similarly, money was also brought from the Tibetan Mint at Trapchi to Norbulinga. Changkyim, a monk official who worked in the Mint, said, "At that time I was working in the Trapchi office (mint) so I used to go to the assembly meetings until 2 P.M. and then leave for work. I would bring money from the Trapchi office and give it where it was needed.[108]

In the assembly, most delegates were strongly asserting that Tibet was independent and that Tibetans can no longer live under the Chinese. These delegates were arguing that the Seventeen-Point Agreement was no longer valid, so the assembly must contact Jenkhentsisum in Kalimpong to help make the events in Lhasa known internationally and also to contact the United Nations for them. Chinese sources state that this contact occurred via two wireless messages that were sent to Kalimpong through the Indian Consulate in Lhasa on the sixteenth and seventeenth of March (the telegrams will be presented in chapter 13). They also sent letters to all dzongs and estates in Tibet in the name of the "People's Congress of Independent Tibet" calling for independence. Excerpts from that letter from a Chinese source follow.

> ORDER ISSUED BY "PEOPLE'S CONGRESS OF INDEPENDENT TIBET" (XIZANG DULI GUO) TO EACH DZONG AND ESTATE
>
> Earth-Pig Year (Ch. tu zhu nian) (1959)
>
> To each Dzong and Estate,
>
> Chinese people have committed crimes of persecution one after another in Tibet. They continued to attack the great teacher of all sentient beings, Sakyamuni, and in the Ganzi Daily newspaper, said our Buddhism was [used] to deceive people. Their ideas are devoid of any religious sense and are destructive. In Kham and Amdo, they killed rinpoches, lamas, and property owners, and destroyed temples. As a result, the people were left with not even a needle and a thread, and have to work like slaves. In addition, many Han Chinese people carried bombs to the Potala. Every time when the Dalai Lama came out from the Potala Palace, Han Chinese wearing Tibetan clothes and hiding guns and bombs would secretly approach the Dalai Lama. Especially this time, on 1 February of the Tibetan calendar [10 March of the Gregorian calendar], in the military headquarters, Han Chinese prepared bombs and fortifications, and were deviously planning to kidnap the Dalai Lama using the pretense of inviting the Dalai Lama to watch a performance. Hearing this news, the Tibetan people could not bear this, and thus they spontaneously went to the Norbulinga where the Dalai Lama lived. They prostrated and pleaded, and prevented the Dalai Lama from going. With the aim of resisting being governed by the invaders who are atheists, and for Buddhism to prosper and to maintain our Tibet as an independent country, and shouting the slogan that, "Tibet has [now] gained independence", the people entered the Barkor Street. On their way, they pasted many slogans and went to the consulates of India, Nepal, and

---

[108] Changkyim, interview, India, 1992, H.0036.01.

> the Kingdom of Bhutan to tell them the situation and request them to be the witnesses. . . .
>
> Now the important issue is that all the monks and officials of the temples and government and all the Tibetans should resolutely and unitedly continue to launch a large-scale movement to completely realize the truth through peaceful ways, with the aim to regain independence like before. In addition, you should disseminate to monks and officials in each area that the characteristics of our nation, of our religion, and of our language, can not be abandoned. Immediately inform the lay and monk officials about the above-mentioned matters. Make them understand that our ethnicity, religion, and language cannot be discarded. Continue to carry out the Tibet Independence Movement (Ch. xizang duli yundong) demonstrations and propagate [this] widely. Regarding the Tibetans who work for the Chinese, you should draw a clear line between you and them and stand firm. If you have some good suggestions, you should inform us. In addition, you should select qualified representatives for the People's Congress (Ch. renmin huiyi) and send them to Lhasa as soon as possible.[109]

Nevertheless, there was still no consensus in the assembly about trying to drive the Chinese out by force, so no plans were being made to launch a coordinated attack against the Chinese in Lhasa. However, since the mimang and the Tibetan army feared a Chinese attack against them, they had done things like set up road barriers and fortified key locations, which led the Chinese to fear that the Tibetans were planning to attack them. Chapter 13 will examine the view of this situation on the Chinese side.

---

[109] "Order Issued by "People's Congress of Independent Tibet" (Ch. xi zang du li guo) to Each Zong and Xiang," in Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuan hui et. al. 1995, 186–87. There was no date on this announcement.

13

Chinese Responses and the Dalai Lama's Flight

THE CHINESE RESPONSE

The Chinese responses to the events of 10 March will be examined through a series of telegrams between the TWC in Lhasa and Mao and the Central Committee. These reveal that although all had concluded that the gradualist policy was not working out and that the Khambas' revolt in Lhoka would have to be suppressed by military force, the Chinese side was surprisingly cautious about how to deal with the situation in Lhasa.

The first of these telegrams was a brief and straightforward account sent by the TWC to the Central Committee on 10 March, laying out the TWC's first take on what had happened,

> Initially, the Dalai had decided to come to the military district to watch a show around 3 o'clock this afternoon. [However,] the reactionary upper classes instigated the masses to gather around Norbulinga and petition the Dalai to prevent him from coming to the military district (headquarters). At that time, three people, [Kalöns] Liushar, Shasur, and Surkhang, managed to safely enter Norbulinga through the crowd, but [Kalön] Sambo got hit in the head with a stone while his car was approaching the gate. Because of his relatively weak body, he passed out twice, but after treatment, he is now out of danger. By 2 P.M., two persons in the crowd were beaten to death, including Phagpalha Rinpoche's brother Khenjung Sonam Gyaltsen (who inclines towards us [politically]). His body was soon after tied to a horse's tail and dragged from Norbulinga to downtown Lhasa in a parade. Around 5 o'clock in the afternoon, approximately five hundred or six hundred people, led by the rebels who were lurking in Lhasa, went on a parade around the Barkor, shouting "We have won, Han people get out of here! Long live Tibet's

Independence! Long live His Holiness the Dalai Lama! Han people get out of here, if you don't, we still have the power to get you out of here!"

After learning that the masses had surrounded Norbulinga and were petitioning to stop the Dalai from coming to the military district headquarters, we immediately sent the Dalai a letter in the name of Comrade [Tan] Guansan saying that it is wonderful that he is willing to come to the military headquarters and that we extend our warmest welcome to him. However, he might take a rain check because of the enormous difficulties caused by the reactionaries' plots and provocations.

Around 2:30 P.M. on 10 March, Liushar, Shasur, and Surkhang came to the Military District Headquarters. They said that yesterday afternoon, five persons from the Dalai's Secretariat [Ch. jinshi jigou] went to the Dalai and [said they] opposed his going to the Military District Headquarters. However, the Dalai instructed Lord Chamberlain Phala to inform them that he had already made up his mind to go.

At the time that the masses were demonstrating/petitioning around Norbulinga, (several) abbots of the Three Great Monasteries, as well as lay and monk officials from the local government, were proposing to the Kashag to pass along word to the Dalai asking him not to come to the Military District Headquarters. Considering that he could not, in fact, go anymore, the Dalai thus sent the three of them [the kalöns] to the TWC in order to discuss this issue. Comrade Guansan indicated [the following] to Liushar and the others:

1. The Dalai has frequently instructed the Kashag to do their best to implement the Central Committee's policies and to maintain national unity. We support and respect the Dalai in these aspects. However, the Kashag has always been disobeying the Dalai's instructions and has not been implementing the Dalai's instructions. [Now] the Dalai has even been deprived of the freedom to [go to] watch a play. The incident today is apparently a well-planned conspiracy that was actually started by the reactionaries inside of the local government. From what happened today, we have doubts on the following two matters:
   i. the Dalai himself has repeatedly expressed the desire to watch a play in the Military Headquarters, (but) reactionaries in the Tibetan government instigated the masses to stop him from coming and created the event today. Thus, *we have suspicions about whether the Dalai leads the Kashag or the Kashag leads the Dalai. Is the Kashag following the Dalai's instructions under his leadership, or disobeying his instructions and acting against him?* . . . .
   ii. Order that the Kashag has to guarantee the Dalai's safety. They are fully responsible if anything happens [to him].
2. Order the Kashag to thoroughly investigate the chief conspirators of today's incident and agree to investigate and bring the murders to justice.
3. The Kashag should take care of the deceased victims' funerals and provide compensation for their families, and then should report their handling to the TWC and the military headquarters.

   Based on the situation above, in addition to enhancing military preparations, we plan to adopt the following strategies:

> i. Under the principle of winning over the Dalai, supporting the progressive forces and exposing the reactionaries' conspiracies, [we should] expose the reactionaries' conspiracies among the officials, masses, and cadres (orally, no written words or newspapers) based on what Comrade Guansan reported.
> ii. Hold memorial services for the progressive personnel who were murdered, and comfort and compensate their families.
>
> *March 10th 1959 [no time stated]*[1]

Some hours later, at 2 A.M. on the eleventh, the TWC sent the Central Committee a second, more detailed, account of the events of the tenth. It said,

> On the afternoon of the 10th, just after instigating the masses to stop the Dalai from coming to the Military District Headquarters, the upper class reactionaries led by Ta Lama Jawdang, Rongnamse Khenjung Tubden Changchub [sic. Norsang], Tsipön Mipön Shügüpa, and Tsipön Kheme held a meeting in Norbulinga [the assembly meeting]. The attendees of the meeting included all the monk officials, half of the lay officials, seven or eight abbots from the Three Great Monasteric Seats [Drepung, Sera, and Ganden], as well as forty to fifty rebels who were carrying guns. They [the "rebels"] attended the meeting in the name of so-called People's representatives [Ch. renmin daibiao].
>
> At the meeting, they decided that from the 10th, the Tibetan people would formally rise up to break away from the Central Committee and would strive for "Tibet Independence" until the end [completion]. They also decided that Tsipön Shügüpa, Tara Khenjung, Jigyab Khembo Gadrang, Surkhang, and the two other kalöns, Vice Commanders Lodrö Kesang and Kheme Dzasa, would lead the movement for "Tibetan Independence." The final candidates to lead the movement had not been settled at the meeting.
>
> They also decided that in the name of the so-called People's Security Guards [Ch. renmin jingwei dui], they would dispatch 50 monks from Drepung Monastery to defend the northwest part of Norbulinga, 50 monks from Sera Monastery to defend the eastern part of the Norbulinga, and a troop of armed rebels within Norbulinga (these armed rebels are ones who escaped to here from Kham). All of them were to serve as the Dalai's security guards. The meeting also decided that all the officials who were working in the Preparatory Committee [PCTAR] should no longer go to work at the Preparatory Committee starting on the 11th. . . .[2]
>
> In addition, according to the information we collected, by the afternoon of the 10th, more than 1,400 monks from the Three Great Monasteric Seats had entered the urban area of Lhasa. The rebels [Khambas], who previously were [residing] scattered around Lhasa, also moved after sunset toward urban Lhasa in small groups (20–30

---

[1] "Report of the TWC to the Central Committee: "The Reactionary Upper Class Instigated the Masses to Petition to Stop the Dalai Lama from Coming to the Military District Headquarters," in Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuan hui 1995, 74–76 (emphasis added).

[2] The missing section talks about some demonstrators going to the Indian Consulate. This was discussed in chapter 12.

> people per group). We estimate that if we count the 2,500–3,000 soldiers of the Tibetan army as well, there are a total of 6,000–7,000 rebels in Lhasa at present. According to the series of events so far, the reactionaries' main plot is to try to abduct the Dalai now [take him out from Lhasa]. The possibility that Dalai will be abducted and taken away exists. Therefore, at this time, the TWC and the Military Headquarters *decided to implement the policy of being defensive in military affairs* and exposing (the rebels' plot) in political affairs.[3]

The TWC, therefore, initially recommended taking only very mild political action by exposing the rebels' plot, which they asserted was to "abduct the Dalai now." There was not even a hint of using PLA troops to restore the calm or giving the Kashag a deadline to gain control over the anti-Chinese demonstrators. Instead, it stated that they would implement the policy of being "defensive in military affairs" but offensive in political affairs. There was also no suggestion that this was likely to turn quickly into a serious uprising in Lhasa. Interestingly, by raising the question of who was really in power, the Dalai Lama or the Kashag, it revealed how little the Chinese in Lhasa understood about the real situation on the Tibetan side.

The Central Committee responded to these two TWC telegrams at 11 P.M. on 11 March, the end of day two of the singdru.

> It is a very good thing for the Tibetan upper classes to openly expose their reactionary faces of betraying the country. Our policy should be: let them be more aggressive and let them expose themselves more, for then we will have more reasons to put down the rebellion. *The Central Military Commission is actively making military preparations [but] as to what time we will start to put down the rebellion, it depends on how the situation develops. Therefore, you should take all measures to have a solid defense and be prepared for the enemy's attack any time. If the enemy attacks you in Lhasa and you can defend yourselves for one or two months or even longer, then things will be a lot easier for us.* According to the above instructions, your specific plans should be the following:
>
> 1. We agree with all the points Comrade Tan Guansan made to Liushar. Spread that message widely among the officials and the masses, with an emphasis on exposing their holding the Dalai under duress [Ch. xiechi] to carry out a treasonous conspiracy of betraying the country.
>
> 2. Explicitly tell Ngabö and anyone who inclines towards us, that Tibet is forever part of China and that no reactionary forces can change this fact. If the reactionaries betray our country, the Central Committee will take resolute action to put them down. We hope that they [people like Ngabö] can take things calmly, work hard, and unite more people. We will make sure of their safety. You can persuade them to move close to our military headquarters, or move into the PCTAR complex.

---

[3] "CCP TWC's Report to the CC on "The Situation of the Reactionary Tibetan Upper Class Officially Seek 'Independence,'" in Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuan hui 1995, 77–78 (emphasis added).

> 3. As for the Dalai himself; we should strive to win him over from multiple channels, *but do not be afraid that reactionaries will kidnap the Dalai. Whether it involves the Dalai's own decision or not, such an action by the enemy will not be harmful to us at all.*
>
> 4. Do not try to block the reactionary armed forces from entering Lhasa, because we should not be fearful of having one or two thousand more enemies. *If we block them [from entering], then we will nominally be starting the battle, and this is not good for us politically* [Ch. zhengzhi shang buli]. As for the Jogpori (Hill), do not take control of it now. Gain control of it after the battle formally starts.[4]
>
> 5. Pay attention to collect various evidence of their treasonous actions of betraying our country. Even a piece of paper or a word is useful.
>
> *Central Committee*
> *23 hours (11 P.M.). March 11, 1959*[5]

In this communiqué, we learn that the Central Military Commission was actively making military preparations to suppress the revolt but had not yet determined when to start the offensive, so the TWC/PLA in Lhasa should continue to fortify defenses so that they could hold out for *a few months* if attacked. In keeping with this policy, the TWC/PLA were told clearly not to try to take control over the most important military position in Lhasa, the Jogpori Hill, and also not to try to stop any rebels from entering Lhasa. The reason given for this was that to do so, the Chinese would have to fight to keep them out, and Beijing was still not ready to fire the first shot. *And critically, it said that if Tibetans take the Dalai Lama away, they are not to worry about it even if it is being done against his will, since they had assessed that his departing would "not be harmful to us."* So at the end of the second day of the Lhasa uprising, Beijing instructed their cadres and troops in Lhasa/Tibet to be active politically but militarily, to continue to focus only on defenses.

The Central Committee, however, also revealed that they knew this would have intenational ramifications, so wanted the Tibetans to be seen as the aggressors and told Lhasa to collect all information/data that would support that conclusion. This exphasis will be even more explicit in Mao's comments below.

When the 10 March demonstration began, Mao Zedong was outside of Beijing in Wuchang (in Wuhan Province), but he was in contact with the Central Committee and sent three telegrams from there regarding Tibet (two of which appear below; the third is not available). Mao's first telegram to the Central Committee was a comment sent on the morning of 12 March, the third day. In this, Mao agreed with the Central Committee's instructions and offered his own thoughts on what should be done about the singdru, suggesting for the first time that the Dalai Lama, who had previously been considered a progressive-leaning figure,now seemed to be part of the uprising.

---

[4] The Jogpori Hill was the highest ground in Lhasa and was the most strategically important military location.

[5] DPRC. "Central Committee's Instructions on "Measures that Should Be Taken After the Upper Classes Openly Exposed their True Colors of Betraying the Country." 11 March 1959 (emphasis added).

> The Central Committee:
>
> I have received the two TWC telegrams of March tenth and eleventh, the Central Committee's instructions to the TWC, and its instructions to the Dalai and other representatives of the National People's Congress to ask them to come to Beijing early. The policy of the Central Committee is completely correct. If things develop like this, there is the possibility that we will be forced (this is a good kind of "forced") to solve the Tibetan question early.[6] *It looks like the Dalai is involved in the plotting of the rebellion and is the leader of the reactionaries.* The tactics of the Dalai's reactionary group are:
>
> 1. Make Norbulinga their base and launch rebellion in Lhasa in order drive away our troops. They can think of using this kind of tactic because for a long time they have seen us as "seeming to be weak."[7] That is, [because we were] only defending and not attacking, they think that, "The Han are afraid," and "The Central Committee is powerless." They think that it is "possible" to drive away the Han.
>
> 2. These people, in fact, have broken away from the Central Committee. It is very likely that they will have to continue like this. One possibility is that they will continue to protest and make trouble in Lhasa in the hope that they will scare away the Han. If in some days or in several months they see that they cannot scare away the Han, they will escape to India or to Lhoka to set up their base. Both possibilities exist.
>
> When the Dalai was in India, Nehru's policy was to persuade the Dalai to go back to Tibet. He believed that it would be better for India to let the Dalai go back to Tibet rather than let him stay in India. This policy may have changed now, [or] it may not have changed. Nehru understands the intentions of the Tibetan reactionaries. . . . [comment on Nehru and Tibet omitted]
>
> *The policy of the TWC at present is to be defensive militarily, and aggressive politically.* The purposes of doing this are: (1) to try to divide the upper hierarchy and to try to win over as many of them as possible to stand on our side, including a part of living lamas and monks, and to make the upper hierarchy fragment into two groups and break away from each other, (2) to educate the masses and prepare the attitudes of the masses, (3) to lure (Ch. yinyou) the enemy to attack us. *When they attack us, at first do not kill or injure a lot of them and do not fight back massively. Better to let them win some small victories and therefore make them feel hopeful about driving away the Hans. Only then will it be possible for them to fight a big battle. Otherwise, there will be only small battles followed by their hurried escape. Of course, this is not bad, but it is not as advantageous for us as fighting a big battle.*
>
> With regard to the Dalai and his followers, internally, they have psychological contradictions. They feel hopeful for getting victories, but are afraid of being

---

6. In Chinese: zhaoci xingshi fazhan xiaqu, xizang wenti you beipo (zhezhong "beipo" shi henhao de) zaori jiejue de keneng. *Early* here, of course, meant using military action.

7. In Chinese: cong wo men chang qi shi ruo.

> defeated and afraid that they will not be able to escape. When they escape, *I think that our troops do not need to stop them at all. Wherever they are going, whether to Lhoka or to India, just let them go. It would be even more advantageous for us if 10,000–20,000 or 30,000–40,000 monks and other reactionaries can escape outside of Tibet.*[8] If so, India, Bhutan, and possibly Nepal will feel great pressure to receive so many fugitives, but India will suffer because of its own actions, and they cannot blame us. *We need to consider now about when they will be escaping, and what kind of political attitude we should have toward the Dalai when they escape.*
>
> *Mao Zedong*
> *11: 00 A.M., March 12, 1959 [from] Wuchang*[9]

Mao started his comments to the Central Committee by stating that, "*if* things develop like this, there is the *possibility* that we (China) will be forced to solve the Tibetan question early." Mao, therefore, was ready to accept that the gradualist policy was failing, the Dalai Lama might be involved with the rebels, and that military force would be necessary.

Moreover, Mao, without acknowledging any responsibility for the mess in Lhasa, also suggested that the mild and patient gradualist approach he had utilized for the past eight years may have given Tibetans the false idea that China was weak and thereby encouraged them to think that they didn't have to fear China or agree to change. This admission was new for Mao, but, of course, this was the type of criticism that Fan Ming had been making about the gradualist policy right from the start. It is also interesting to note that while Mao was still unwilling to order the start of the military option, he obviously thought this was likely to occur, since he passed on his "rope-a-dope" strategy for luring the insurgents into a grand decisive battle. Nevertheless, the policy on the twelfth was still to *be defensive militarily and aggressive politically*.

Later that same day [12 March], the Central Committee transmitted its instructions to the TWC together with Mao's views.

> Central Committee's Instructions on Putting Down the Rebellion in Tibet
>
> 1. . . . [O]ur policy is to let the enemies be more aggressive, more crazy, so let them attack us first so that we will occupy a positive position politically and get stronger reasons for putting down the rebellion militarily and for carrying out democratic reforms. *Do not be too impatient [Ch. xinji].* In order to avoid any chance of getting us into a politically unfavorable position and giving our enemy any excuses to get *more Tibetans involved* to oppose us, *you must not carry out the policy of launching a preemptive military attack.*[10] You should use any opportunity to

---

[8] In Chinese: Dalai jiqi yiqun, tamen de xinli shi maodun de, juede shengli youwang, youpa daer busheng, taobu chuqu. Tamen taozou shi, wo yiwei wojun yigai buyao lanzu, wulun qu shannan, qu yindu, rang tamen qu. Zuihao neng taozou lama yu qita fandong fenzi yier wanren zhi sansi wanren.

[9] DPRC. "Mao's comments to the Central Committee," 12 March 1959.

[10] In Chinese: qie buke caiqu junshi shang xianfa zhiren de fangzhen.

> expose the enemy's crime of betraying our country among the people of all fields and among the masses. Let people know both the Central Committee's hope for the rebels to change their mind and our utmost tolerance and patience regarding this, as well as our determination to punish the rebels. In this way, we may isolate and fragment the enemy, and get more of those in the middle to move close to us.
>
> 2. The Central Committee and the Central Military Commission are discussing an overall military plan to put down the rebellion, and they are considering combining the crushing of the rebellion with carrying out democratic reforms. The TWC and the [Tibetan] military headquarters should please carefully study these questions and let us know your opinions in detail.
>
> 3. When you are dealing with the enemy, except for specific issues, try to avoid using any written communications. When you must pass a document in written form to them [the Tibetan government], get permission from the Central Committee first.
>
> 4. Chairman Mao has important analysis and instructions on Tibetan questions. We pass them to you and hope you will carefully study them and carry them out.
>
> *Central Committee*
> *22 hours, March 12, 1959*[11]

So three days after the Lhasa Uprising, the instructions from Beijing were still not urgent or aggressively militant. The TWC was told that an overall military plan to put down the revolt and implement reforms was being developed, so they should not act impatient now and initiate any military attacks that would give their enemies any excuses to get *more* Tibetans involved to oppose us." Beijing was clearly not in a rush to use the 10 March uprising as an excuse to launch a military offensive, as is often asserted in the literature.[12] In fact, as will be seen in detail in chapter 14, even on 20 March, the day the "Battle for Lhasa" started, the Central Military Commission initially rejected Tan Guansan's request to go on the offensive.

However, by 15 March, two days before the Dalai Lama fled, the TWC provided Beijing with a much more negative assessement of the escalating/deteriorating situation in Lhasa.

> TWC's Opinions on Implementing the Central Committee's Instructions on March 11th
>
> (March 15, 1959)
>
> 1. Based on the things that happened in recent months, especially the recent two days, *the signs that the Tibetan reactionaries are initiating a full-scale revolt is increasingly apparent.*

---

[11] DPRC. "Central Committee's Instructions on Putting Down the Rebellion in Tibet." 12 March 1959.

[12] For example, Li Jianglin 2016.

  - i. The variety of standpoints (big fight, small fight, early fight, late fight, intellectual fight, physical fight) have basically become unified after negotiations on the 10th. Politically, for the first time, they have revealed their intention to split from us. *Militarily, they are forcing us to take the initiative.* Reactionary forces from different sides (Tibetan Army, three great monasteries, and reactionaries who escaped from neighboring areas) have become united publicly. *Based on what happened on March 12th, 13th, and 14th, the enemy has taken on the strategy of actively preparing militarily, while politically paralyzing us.*
  - ii. Officials in the local government and the so-called people's representatives have secretly announced "Tibet Independence" via the Indian Consulate. And the reactionaries intimidated [Ch.wei xie] the masses to make a public petition to the India Consulate.
  - iii. [The reactionaries are] making political and military preparations simultaneously. Politically, *they have cut connections with us,* and although they have not announced Tibet independence officially, they have done this to the masses.[13] Militarily, they have reinforced the defenses in Norbulinga, the Jogpori Hill and the Potala Palace, and they have controlled one section of the national defense highway from the northern side of Norbulinga to Lhasa. In the meantime, they actively organized the armed volunteer army, intimidated the masses to participate, and summoned the reactionaries from everywhere to gather in Lhasa.
  - iv. The Dalai's Norbulinga has become the command center for the reactionaries.
  - v. The reactionaries have been openly threatening and killing progressive personnel.

    The only thing left is for the reactionaries to announce the split from us publically. The enemies are now [like] arrows on a bowstring. As soon as the reactionaries in Lhasa announce the rebellion publically or initiate an attack against us, the full-scale rebellion will begin. *So as for now, will the atmosphere be increasingly intense, or will it be pacified a bit before it gets more intense? It depends on where this [the current situation] is going.*

2. According to the Central Committee's instructions, we should now focus on the following aspects.
  - i. Make further military [defensive] preparations. Fortify the work units/compounds, and be ready to fight back against the enemy whenever [they attack us]. All the work units/compounds in Lhasa and every work committee should further reinforce the work on defenses, store sufficient army provisions and fodder *for more than six months, and get ready for a long-term defense* (specific army distributions will be arranged by the military district). Those work units/compounds and the local administrative offices that are scattered or have weak defensive forces should be dismissed or merged immediately. [In addition, we should] reinforce political-ideological education, articulate the current situation to all army members and local officials.

---

[13] The kalöns did not try to meet with the TWC after the visit of three of them on the afternoon of the tenth.

On the one hand, [we need to] make them aware that the reactionaries' revolt has been escalating day by day, and that the signs of initiating a comprehensive revolt are increasingly apparent. We need to be mobilized, get prepared and be confident to face the enemy's confrontations. On the other hand, [we need to] acknowledge that the enemy is sly. Although currently they are very crazy, this self-exposure is not enough yet. [We need to] make them be more aggressive and more revealing, which will benefit us more in completely eliminating the reactionaries and solving the Tibet question. For the Tibetan cadres and students, [we need to] educate them to maintain a high level of revolutionary vigilance in order to prepare for everything. In the meantime, [we need to] pay special attention to protect their safety.

ii. Be more politically aggressive using every possible method. Make great efforts in oral (do not use written) propaganda [to] fully reveal the enemy's conspiracy and criminal actions. In terms of the methods for propaganda, make the best of wired broadcasting wherever possible. Make broadcasts timely and repeatedly. The research office should research, analyze, and draft propaganda content in a timely manner (no written propaganda for the outside).

For Tibetan workers, farmers, nomads, and urban residents, if possible, in addition to the general propaganda, (we) might organize small and concise armed work teams consisting of twenty to thirty people to propagandize in a focused and well-planned way in the surrounding areas of the Lhasa suburbs.

[We] have decided to hold a meeting with administrative officials, Tibetan cadres and students, military members, and the upper class, in which the responsible comrades in the TWC will report Tibet's current situation and our strategies.

In order to facilitate divisions within the ruling class, [we have to] support the progressive forces, [and] reveal [to them] the conspiracy of the reactionary upper class.

3. [We still need to] continue working on united front [activities]. Spread our efforts as far as possible. Establish contacts and networks widely to learn more information. Protect those progressive and active persons, but treat them differently based on the following categories:
   i. Transfer and guarantee the safety of those who have publically revealed [themselves to us] and have confronted the enemy (mainly [move them] to the PCTAR, but administrative offices could also accommodate a few on their own).
   ii. Try to win over the two-faced ones. Transfer part of them and intentionally leave part of them in the society.
   iii. For those who have approached us, but haven't exposed [this standpoint to others, we might] keep them on the enemy's side, while letting them keep working for us.
4. Work harder on collecting evidence of the enemy's betrayal. Collect any single piece of paper, character, picture, and so on. Relevant departments such as the Social Department should summarize their experiences of the recent two days, to improve this work in the future.

> When the going is tough and conflicts are escalating, all levels of the party committee's officials should be calm and stay updated. [We should] carefully analyze the materials, make judgments about the status quo, and reveal the enemy's criminal facts accurately and timely. [We should also] stratify the upper class and conduct educational propaganda among the masses. [We should] keep boosting morale and keep confidence firm. Right now, the only way to obtain success is to avoid complacency as well as impatience and fear among some people. Every Work Committee and Youth Control Party Committee should implement this spirit based on local conditions.[14]

As this report reveals, the TWC still did not consider that they were in the midst of a full-scale revolt, which as we know, was Mao's criterion for unleashing the PLA to use offensive force. Instead, they reported only that "the signs that the Tibetan reactionaries are initiating a full-scale revolt *is increasingly apparent*" and said that "As soon as the reactionaries in Lhasa announce the rebellion publically or initiate an attack against us, the full-scale rebellion will begin," but until then they should intensify defensive preparations and store sufficient army provisions and fodder to last for more than six months. On the other hand, the Chinese were already talking about collecting evidence to justify their eventual use of the army, and conversely being careful in what they sent to the Dalai Lama.

On that same day, 15 March, Mao commented on Tan's first letter to the Dalai Lama.

> To The Central Committee:
>
> The [first] letter to the Dalai Lama, written in Tan Guansan's name, is very good, and it situates us in a politically active position; so let's see how he will respond to it. If he replies to it, no matter what attitude he has, write another letter to him. In the future, we should deal with him with courtesy if he does the same to us. We can write him more. *These letters are for publication in the future.* So prepare a letter that describes the goals of the Central Committee and how we have had a lenient and patient attitude in handling big events during the last few years. Our goals are to wait for the rebels and pro-independence Tibetans to give up their ideas, and to hope that the Dalai will fulfill his promises and work with the Central Committee in putting down the rebellion, getting rid of all the rebels, and joining the unity of all people in China. In this way, we hope that Tibet will have a bright future. Otherwise, they will harm the Tibetan people, and eventually they will be abandoned by the Tibetan people. Please consider the above.
>
> *Mao Zedong*
> *4:00 P.M. March 15, 1959*[15]

---

[14] "March 15th 1959, CCP TWC's Opinions on Implementing the Central Committee's Instruction of March 11th," in Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui et al. 1995, 85–87.

[15] DPRC. Chairman Mao's "Opinion to the Central Committee Regarding a Letter to Dalai, Written in the Name of Tan Guansan," 15 March 1959.

More of Mao's thinking about the failure of his gradualist policy can be seen in the report of a 15 March discussion on Tibet held in Wuchang between Mao and the two senior-most cadres from the TWC, Zhang Jingwu and Zhang Guohua, both of whom were on leave in Beijing. Mao now told them that *the reactionaries cannot be won over* and that the situation is like an old saying: "If Heaven wishes to rain or your mother wishes to remarry, there is no way to stop them (Ch. tianyao xiayu, niangyao jiaren). Their [the Tibetan elite's] class nature determines that they will cause trouble."[16] Mao also told them,

> "*It is true that we decided that in Tibet the reforms would not be started during the period of the second Five-Year Plan, or, they would not be started even at a much later time, but they never believed this, because they opposed the reforms absolutely.* [However], bad things can be turned to good things. I already said a long time ago that only if [Ch. zhiyao] the Tibetan reactionaries dare to launch a comprehensive rebellion will we put down the rebellion and start the reforms. Meanwhile, we should believe that more than 95% of the people side with us."[17]

In another article, Wen Feng said Mao also told the two Zhangs, "When discussing the possibility that the Dalai Lama and his entourage might flee after the upper classes publicly rebel, Mao Zedong said: '*If the Dalai Lama and his group of people escapes, our army should not block it. If they want to go to Lhoka, or India, let them go.*' [He continued] 'it is not a bad thing that they rebelled. The earlier the rebellion, the earlier the reform; the later the rebellion, the later the reform; no rebellion, the slower the reform. Now they have already rebelled, so we have to do reforms while putting down the rebellion. The overall strategy is a combination of military attack, political winning over and mass mobilization. [Thus,] a military rebellion of a few reactionaries will lead to a thorough liberation of the working masses."[18]

These comments by Mao reveal that he had now clearly concluded that the concessions, special treatment and the postponement of reforms granted to the Dalai Lama had backfired and had emboldened the elite to falsely conclude that the Chinese were weak and could be overcome. Nevertheless, since his policy in Tibet was conceived as a two-part win-win policy even though China would now have to use the PLA to crush the rebellion, terminate the Dalai Lama's government, and implement land reforms and class transformations, this was not a defeat but a success, because it would transform Tibet much sooner. However, despite this rationalization, because Mao had invested so much in his gradualist policy, this must be seen as one of Mao's most glaring failures.

---

[16] Wen Feng. "Wentao wulue—mao zedong yu 1959 nian pingxi Xizang panluan" (Prominent Statesmanship and Military Expertise—Mao Zedong and Putting Down the Tibetan Rebellion of 1959), on the CCP's official website, http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/85037/85038/7492047.html (accessed 25 March 2017). Wen Feng does not specify where he got these quotations.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Wen Feng 2009, 4–13.

A few days later, on 17 March, *the very evening the Dalai Lama fled from Lhasa,* Liu Shaoqi headed the first of three days of Politburo meetings at which Mao's comments on Tibet from Wuhan were reported by Huang Kecheng.[19]

There are several Chinese accounts of this meeting, one of which summarized the meeting's conclusion, saying,

> On 17 March, the Central Committee held a Politburo meeting to discuss the urgent situation of the Tibetan army actively preparing for rebellion and the suggestions of Mao Zedong. The meeting was presided over by Liu Shaoqi. *The almost unanimous opinion was reached that it is best to try to keep the Dalai Lama in Lhasa. However, if he leaves, it is not a big deal*, because our present position has changed from waiting for the upper classes in the old Tibetan government to come to their senses, to [ourselves] resolutely putting down the rebellions and carrying out full-scale reform. Zhou Enlai also pointed out that the Indians are involved in this, and the British and the Americans are very active behind the curtain, supporting the Indians. The command center of the rebellions is in Kalimpong, India.[20]

A more detailed account of this Politburo meeting said:

> In the afternoon, at 3:00 P.M., the Politburo held a meeting in West Building (Ch. xilou), to discuss the economy issue in the first three months of 1959 and the arrangement (about the economy) in the second three months (of 1959).
>
> [Huang] Kecheng and others had returned from Hankou. Chairman [Mao] who was still in Wuhan, said on the issue of Tibet and the Dalai Lama:
>
> 1. [I, Mao] agree with the policy of the Central Committee; continuing to carry out this policy will make the situation better. Politically, [we] have finally seized the initiative.
>
> 2. Try your best not to let the Dalai Lama leave. In the future, if he is in our hands, it will be easy to release him [if we want]. *However, in case he manages to flee, that is no big deal. [Ch. jinkeneng burang dalai zou, jianglai yaofang ye rongyi, fanzheng zai women shouli, wanyi paole ye buyaojin.]*
>
> 3. The PLA [reinforcement] troops entering Tibet should encircle Lhasa, which wouild be good for us as it would divide the reactionary troops.
>
> However, do not start the attack now; [the PLA reinforcement troops] should be able to arrive before 10 April; and if we didn't have a battle in Lhasa, we could first of

---

[19] Huang was the PLA's chief of staff (Ch. zong canmouzhang) and secretary general of the Central Military Commission. He was also a member of the Central Committee.

[20] Wen Feng 2009, 4–13.

> all dispatch one regiment to Shannan [Lhoka], to control the important areas there so as to block the escape routes.[21]
>
> 4. The most important areas for putting down the rebellion should be Lhasa and Shannan; for the other areas, no need to hurry.
>
> 5. [We] should emphasize putting down the rebellion and avoid mentioning starting the reforms; [we] should put the work of reform below the work of putting down the rebellion; [we] should carry out our policies according to different situations of different areas: [for the areas where] the rebellion happened early [we] should start the reform early, [for the areas where] the rebellion happened late [we] should start the reforms late, and [for the areas where] no rebellion happened, [we] should not start the reforms.
>
> 6. [I] agreed with the Military Committee on the arrangements for the PLA [reinforcement] troops to enter Tibet. . . .[22]

A third Chinese source on the Politburo meeting on the seventeenth said,

> On 17 March, the rebels in Tibet blatantly kidnapped the Dalai and sent him out of Lhasa. On the same day, Liu Shaoqi held a meeting of the Politburo of CCP Central Committee. In the meeting, the attendees discussed the urgent situation of the Tibetan rebellion and the suggestions put forward by Mao Zedong, who sent three telegrams to the Central Committee between 12 March and 15 March. . . .
>
> Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping said at that time, first of all, we should prepare for putting down the rebellion resolutely, reorganize the local government of Tibet, reorganize the Tibet Army (Ch. zangjun), carry out the policy of the separation between the church and the state, and then we should launch the democratic reforms. . . .[23]

Beijing's reactions to the Lhasa uprising between the tenth and seventeenth, therefore, reveal that Mao and the Central Committee had made the decision to use the PLA to suppress the revolt, although they also indicated that no offensive attack should occur until all the military preparations were completed. In the meantime, they should concentrate on defenses and political activism, for example by trying to educate the masses, who would be the ones left after the elite were deposed.

---

[21] This, of course, contradicted his earlier comment on letting all the reactionaries flee Tibet, and makes more sense militarily. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, the battle for Lhasa did occur before the reinforcements arrived, so as soon as these troops reached Lhasa, they were able to move into Lhoka (on 7 April 1959).

[22] Yang Shangkun 2001, 366. This book was edited by the "Party Literature Research Center of the CCP Central Committee" (Ch. zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi). The "publication statement" says that in order to "keep the original appearance" (Ch. yuanmao) of the diary's text," they only revised some typos or other small things. Yang Shangkun was an old guard revolutionary and military leader who from 1946–56 was the secretary-general of the Central Military Commission, and then became head of the Central Committee's General Office, a position he held in 1959 (emphasis added).

[23] "Meetings of Political Bureau of Central Committee, March 17th to 20th, 1959," http://dangshi.people.com.cn/GB/151935/176588/176596/10556168.html (accessed 25 March 2017).

Regarding the Dalai Lama, Mao said on 12 March that when the Dalai Lama and his followers escape, "I think that our troops do not need to stop them at all" On the other hand, they said that it would be good if the Dalai Lama could be kept in Lhasa, but at the same time, there was also a consensus that it would not be a big deal if he left, either of his own free will or forcibly taken by the "rebels." As will be seen in a later chapter, this policy was actually utilized. When the TWC called the Central Military Commission in Beijing on 17 May informing them that the Dalai Lama was going to leave that very evening, Beijing responded almost immediately, telling them to let him go.

However, regarding the threat of a Tibetan attack, we see that the Chinese in Lhasa were convinced, incorrectly to be sure, that the Tibetan insurgents in Lhasa were about to attack them, when in fact there was no military plan for attacking the Chinese positions in Lhasa nor had Chushigandru been contacted regarding joining the uprising in Lhasa. Anger and misinterpretation on both sides, therefore, was pulling and pushing the Kashag's horse right over the abyss.

PLANNING THE DALAI LAMA'S FLIGHT

On the Tibetan side, the days immediately following 10 March were chaotic and dangereous, as the Kashag's control of the situation, in particular of the mimang demonstrators, continued to decline. There was little the Kashag could do to restore order since they (and the Dalai Lama) had chosen not to use the Tibetan army to disperse the mimang and prevent demonstrations in the city, let alone try to arrest those responsible for killing Phagpalha Khenjung and injuring Kalön Sambo. Incorporating the mimang leaders into the Tibetan Assembly gave the government some influence over them, but it did not stop elements of the fired-up mimang from setting up road blocks, cutting telegraph wires, firing shots into Chinese positions, and so forth. Particularly distressing was the mimang leaders' defiant refusal on 12 March to obey the Kashag's order to dismantle the barricades they had set up on the Qinghai-Lhasa highway. There was, therefore, no obvious way to return to the pre–10 March situation of control without resorting to the use of the Tibetan army, and this was considered a no-go. Consequently, there was no way to be sure that the mimang would not go too far and provoke a military response from the PLA, who as we saw had been making extensive preparations for responding to an attack. And if fighting erupted while the Dalai Lama was in Lhasa, there was a genuine danger that he could be lost—either killed or taken control of by the Chinese. It was this fear that led Phala, Gadrang, and the Surkhang-led Kashag to quietly conclude that the likelihood that this would end in violence was so great, that their priority had to be to organize the escape of the Dalai Lama as soon as possible.

The Kashag *believed* that it was essential to maintain complete secrecy about this, since if the Chinese learned of it they they would try to stop him. Consequently, they concluded that only one person should be given the authority to organize and implement the escape. For this task, the Kashag turned to Phala, the lord chamberlain. Phala had a long and close relationship with the Dalai Lama as one of his most trusted advisors, and as discussed previously, was widely respected among Tibetan officials for his discipline, shrewdness, and competence, so Surkhang and the other kalöns had confidence that he could manage an escape plan successfully, especially since his position as the Dalai Lama's lord chamberlain gave him constant access to the Dalai Lama without raising undue attention. Drakten, the monk official, recalled hearing about the moment when Surkhang, on behalf of the Kashag, told this to Phala:

> Today you [must] take complete responsibility for making the arrangements. You should do everything. The Kashag is placing full authority in your hands, and there will be no discussions back and forth between us about this. It will be like the proverb, "the clay pot will be broken between two people."[24] There is no time for that [discussions between the Kashag, Gadrang, and Phala]. So now you have to say do this or that, and we will just follow. So you are the one fully in charge."[25]

Phala, therefore, was to organize the escape, while the Kashag would continue to try to buy time by working to exercise restraint on the mimang leaders through the assembly meetings and the Norbulinga Command Center. The Kashag would also try to persuade the Chinese not to go on the offensive by crafting faux-progressive letters for the Dalai Lama to send to Tan Guansan, for example the one on the twelfth presented above, which kept the TWC guessing if the Dalai Lama was still a progressive.

Phala and the Kashag worked hard to keep the planning a secret, because Chinese spies and sympathizers were everywhere, but also because this had to be kept secret from the Tibetan mimang who were guarding Norbulinga. If the mimang learned of such plans, it was feared that they would try to block the Dalai Lama's leaving. Kundeling, a monk official who, as will be seen, played a major role in Phala's plan, commented on this. "Outwardly, we had to keep it secret from the Chinese and internally, if the lay and monk Tibetan people knew about it, they might be startled and there was a danger they may cause trouble. So we also had to avoid this danger."[26]

The idea of moving the Dalai Lama to safety to India (or southern Tibet) was not new. It had actually been on the minds of Tibetan leaders like Phala and Surkhang for years, going back even to 1950–51, when the United States and many leading Tibetan officials were urging the Dalai Lama to reject the Seventeen-Point

---

[24] In Tibetan: mi gnyis bar la rdza chag. This saying is commonly used when two people do one thing at the same time, leading to the thing not being done well.

[25] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.05.

[26] Kun bde gling (Kundeling) 2000, 217.

Agreement, go into exile in India, and with US support, oppose the Chinese takeover of Tibet.[27] However, at that time, it was decided to return to live under the terms of the Seventeen -Point Agreement, which provided internal autonomy and no forced reforms, since by contrast, the extent of America's commitment to Tibet was not certain. Surkhang, however, had more understanding of history and international politics, since his brother knew English and translated broadcasts and articles for him, so he understood what Mao's communism represented and knew from the start that there was no future for people like him (aristocrats) under communism. He believed that eventually the Chinese would take everything away, so when the Dalai Lama and most other officials returned to Lhasa in 1951, he feigned ill health and remained in Kalimpong. He only returned in 1952 after coming under heavy pressure from his parents.

This issue also surfaced again in 1956–57, when it was time for the Dalai Lama to return from the Buddha Jayanti celebrations in India. At that time, senior officials like Surkhang, Phala, and the leaders of the Jenkhentsisum émigré group pressured the Dalai Lama to stay in India and lead the resistance movement from there.[28] However, the Dalai Lama again was persuaded to return to make the best of Tibet's limited internal autonomy. Surkhang, however, was now even more convinced that there was no long-term future for the traditional system and for people like him, so when he went to India with the Dalai Lama for the celebrations, he not only brought along his only son (Jamba Tseden) and younger brother (Surkhang Khenjung), but also much of the family's valuables and then left them in Kalimpong when he and the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa in early 1957. Moreover, the following year, he secretly sent his daughter and niece from Lhasa to Kalimpong disguised as servants in a car of the Sikkim royal family. He and Phala, therefore, both were convinced that the best hope for Tibet and the Dalai Lama in the long term was to get him safely to India.

The Dalai Lama's brother-in-law Taklha, the Commander of the Bodyguard Regiment, had similar thoughts. In September 1958, just after news of the first series of Khamba-PLA battles in Nyemo reached Lhasa, he visited the Dalai Lama in Ganden Monastery, where he was taking a portion of his geshe exams. Taklha feared that battles between the PLA and the Khambas could escalate quickly and endanger Lhasa and the Dalai Lama, so he urged the Dalai Lama to *leave right then and go directly from Ganden to Lhoka.*[29] The Dalai Lama did not agree and recalled thinking that just leaving with no plan was pointless.[30]

---

[27] For a detailed discussion of this early attempt, see Goldstein 1989, especially pages 773–811, and Goldstein 2007, 114–68.

[28] See Goldstein 2014, 345–444.

[29] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 2004, H.0019.09.

[30] Ibid.

Now, five months later, Surkhang and Phala concluded that the Dalai Lama had to be moved out of Lhasa immediately. Phala's plan had a number of components, one of which was the route to be used. The main route to India went through Gyantse and Phari to Yadong and then to Sikkim in India. An alternative route went through Yangpachen to Shigatse to Nepal. These routes were well known and relatively easy, but there were several Chinese offices and garrisons along the way and a lot of Chinese motor traffic. Phala, therefore, chose a less common route that crossed the Lhasa River at the Ramagang ferry site and then continued southeast across the Yarlungtsangpo River to Lhoka, where the main base of Chushigandru was located. Once there, the danger was minimum, since there was only one small Chinese garrison on the south bank of the river at Tsetang, and it was then under siege by Chushigandru fighters. Moreover, from the Yarlungtsangpo River south, there were no motorable roads that the PLA could use to advance quickly. Consequently, once the Dalai Lama crossed into Lhoka, he would be able to move to southern Lhoka near the Indian border without having to confront PLA troops stationed there, although there was still concern about PLA troops coming from Lhasa behind them or from Chamdo or Tsang (Shigatse), moving west/east to cut them off before they reached India. They had no idea that Beijing had instructed the PLA that it was okay if the Dalai Lama left.

Who should accompany the Dalai Lama was another important issue. It ended up that he would be accompanied by roughly 20–30 officials, family, and servants, all of whom would need horses. Phala, therefore, needed to arrange for 20–30 horses with saddles and saddlebags to be waiting on the south bank of the Lhasa River, so that as soon as the Dalai Lama and his entourage crossed, they could immediately ride off to Lhoka via the Chela Pass. The obvious place to get these horses was the large government stable at Norbulinga, which contained about 200 horses. Phala, however, was sure that both the Chinese and the Tibetan mimang were keeping an eye on that stable, looking for something unusual, such as 20–30 horses being kept together, since this could be a sign the Dalai Lama was about to depart.

Phala, therefore, turned to Kundeling Dzasa, a monk official and the senior manager of Kundeling Labrang in Lhasa. He was not only capable and trustworthy, but the labrang was located between Norbulinga and the Ramagang ferry crossing. In addition, Kundeling had an estate named Tsakur, which was very near to the ferry site. So after swearing him to secrecy, Phala told Kundeling to "'Get your labrang's horses ready to leave, but tell people only that these horses are being rounded up to be sent to graze at the Tsakur estate.' Phala told him to use whatever quality horses he had, even if they were low-quality village horses. . . . And he told him to put a blanket or two under the saddle of each horse and include a saddlebag with all necessary food items, so that each rider would have some food in case he got separated from the group."[31]

---

[31] Drakten, interview, India, 1992, H.0001.05.

Once safely in Lhoka, Phala and Surkhang's basic idea was to stay in southern Lhoka for some time in a dzong such as Lhüntse, where, if possible, they would try to operate as an "away government" (Tib. cheshung) as they had done in Yadong in 1951, and possibly open new discussions with the Chinese. However, the situation now was very different than it had been in 1950–51. At that time, the PLA was one thousand or more miles away in Chamdo, which meant they were months away on foot, whereas in 1959 they were just days away, and now they also had a functioning military airport near Lhasa. Holding on to territory even in a remote place like Lhüntse sounded nice, but without a detailed plan to defend such a territory, it was just wishful thinking. The Dalai Lama mentioned this in an interview when he said, "Even the escape from Norbulinga, no proper sort of plan. Just cross the Kyichu (Lhasa River) and then we will see. At least one thing we knew was that southern Tibet no Chinese soldier except at Tsetang. Otherwise no ideas."[32]

Phala, Kundeling, and a few trusted officials were able to organize the escape quickly and efficiently, but that still left a final and difficult hurdle to overcome—getting the Dalai Lama to agree to leave. As we saw with the issue of going to the show, the Dalai Lama, although still a young man of twenty-four, had shown that he could make his own decisions against the advice of his senior officials. The kalöns and Phala wanted the Dalai Lama to leave Lhasa as soon as possible, but the Dalai Lama initially did not agree. On the one hand he was weighing the same basic kinds of costs and benefits that he pondered when he was deciding whether to remain in India in 1957. If he stayed, the current internal autonomy could continue and there would be no forced reforms for at least the next six or eleven years. On the other hand, if fighting between the mimang and the PLA suddenly erupted in Lhasa, he might never be able to make it to India. In difficult situations like this, Tibetans typically consulted the gods for prophecies. In this case, the Dalai Lama consulted the premier state oracle, Nechung. This was taken so seriously that the Dalai Lama had ordered the medium of Nechung to stay in Norbulinga after 10 March so he could be summoned quickly to go into trance and allow the deity Nechung to be consulted directly through him.[33] In addition, there was the other parallel custom of requesting divine advice in the form of a lottery (Tib. senriy) in front of an image of a deity to decide which of several paths should be followed. Consequently, persuading the Dalai Lama to leave was going to involve not just persuading the Dalai Lama but also Tibet's protector deities.

We do not know exactly how many times Phala discussed the issue of leaving with the Dalai Lama after 10 March, but regarding formally asking the protector deity Nechung, the Dalai Lama said, "I consulted Nechung about three times. At first, Nechung said that it would not be good to leave from Norbulinga. That's exactly what he said."[34] And since the Dalai Lama did not want to leave without the protector deity's blessing, he made no decision.

---

[32] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 2004, H.0019.09 (English uncorrected).

[33] Kun bde gling (Kundeling) 2000, 215. Nechung normally resided in his own monastery, which was just east of Drepung, about five miles from Lhasa.

As days passed and the situation in Lhasa was worsening, Phala continued to plan the escape without the Dalai Lama having agreed to flee, since he was convinced the Dalai Lama would eventually yield, and he wanted everything to be completely ready when he finally did.

Meanwhile, the Kashag had not met or spoken directly with the Chinese officials in the TWC since 10 March, so they tried to find out what the Chinese were thinking by contacting Kalön Ngabö a second time. The Kashag's secretary, Gyegyepa, recalled taking their message to him.

> On the third or fourth [12 or 13 March], I was again sent to Ngabö. This time I was told to take a secret codebook that consisted of numbers and letters for sending communications.[35] This was to enable the Kashag and Ngabö to exchange private communications. I was also told to ask Ngabö what opinions/suggestions he had for the Kashag regarding the situation.
>
> When I met Ngabö, he said, "If the kalöns have made their determination, then that is it [he meant if they have decided to oppose China, there is nothing he can do]." His expression showed that he didn't like that. Then when I asked him on behalf of the kalöns what was going to happen from the Chinese side, he said, "I live near the bridge and at night when I go to bed I hear continuous car noises all night, so they [Chinese] appear to be making tremendous preparations, so the kalöns should consider this well." Then I returned and told the kalöns what Ngabö said. I never went with a message again.[36]

Ngabö's response further increased Surkhang and Phala's fear that an outbreak of warfare was imminent and enhanced their determination to get the Dalai Lama to agree to leave Lhasa at once. As Phala's preparations to take the Dalai Lama to Lhoka intensified, he realized he needed to find out firsthand what the situation was at the crossing points across the Yarlungtsangpo River into Lhoka. So he and Kundeling Dzasa told Commander Tashi Bera to summon a few of his most trustworthy Trapchi Regiment officers (Kedram and Chölungnanga) and sent them to Lhoka to bring back Lobsang Yeshe, who, as discussed in chapter 12, had gone to join Chushigandru with a group of forty or so Tibetan soldiers in December 1958.

Lobsang Yeshe and his group were still waiting in Gonggar for Gombo Tashi to return, so when he and his men heard the news of the 10 March uprising, they called a meeting to decide what to do. Namgyal Wangdü, one of the Tibetan army soldiers with him, recalled,

[34] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.

[35] For an explanation of this type of codebook, see chapter 3.

[36] Gyegyepa, interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0011.02.

> During this time, some of our soldiers had been deployed to guard the Jagsam ferry site, and I myself was stationed around Pobra to guard that territory. However, as soon as I heard about the news in Lhasa, I immediately went to Gonggar to discuss this with Lobsang Yeshe. We blew the army bugle to call for a meeting [Tib. lhendung], and all the leaders gathered. Previously, while we were at Gonggar, we had taught a lot of drills to the Chushigangdru fighters, including quite a lot of bugle calls. So we all gathered and said that this is what has happened at Lhasa, so what should we do now? Some said that we should go to Nyetang, but some disagreed. Since there was no consensus, we did a divine lottery in front of the goddess Lhamo. The result said that it is a good idea to go to Nyetang [north of the river], so we went there and immediately contacted Norbulinga by sending two of our soldiers with a message telling them that Lobsang Yeshe and we have arrived at Nyetang, so please give us whatever orders you may have. We sent the request [to Norbulinga] through Ragashag [the Commander of the Gyantse Regiment], and immediately received a reply through persons disguised as villagers, telling us that tomorrow they are going to send representatives.[37]

One of these representatives was Captain Kedram of the Trapchi Regiment, who recalled what happened next.

> I went to Nyetang and met Lobsang Yeshe and the others with him. Lobsang Yeshe had about sixty to seventy people down there. I told them that there was chaos at Norbulinga, so everything and everybody must be well prepared. Then, when I asked them what they had done, they said they had not done anything. So [I] said, "You should [make it hard for the PLA to follow us] by destroying the bridges and the motorable roads, and if there is anything else, like narrow passages [high] above the river [Tib. trang], these should also be destroyed." At that time, the river level was high, but there were still some places where trucks [could] cross. [I said to them that] If there are Chinese trucks crossing, inform Chushigandru if that place is closer to Nyetang. But if [it is] closer to Norbulinga, then inform the Command Center at Norbulinga." We left this message with them and then we took Lobsang Yeshe back to Lhasa with us and dropped him off at Phala's house [in Norbulinga]. . . . This was on the sixth (15 March).[38]

Namgyal Wangdü also recalled the arrival of Kedram,

> The next day Kedram and Chölungnanga came. They did not have anything specific to say, but told Lobsang Yeshe and [Chushigandru's] Künga Samden to come back to Norbulinga. It had now been two or three days [since the singdru started]. There were also orders that we should stay on guard on both the north and south banks of the Yarlungtsangpo River, so we posted troops there and did everything they told us.[39]

---

[37] Namgyal Wangdü, interview, India, 1993, H.0020.02.

[38] Kedram, interview, India, 1995, H.0041.04.

[39] Namgyal Wangdü, interview, India, 1993, H.0020.02. Two or three days seems too soon. This probably took place on the fifth of the second lunar month.

When Lobsang Yeshe finally met Phala, he informed him that Chushigandru was in control of the various ferry sites along the Yarlungtsangpo River as well as the rest of Lhoka. The only Chinese garrison was at Tsetang, and it was currently under a siege by a Chushigandru force, so the road to Lhoka was safe and open and the Dalai Lama could leave right now. Phala tried to use this information to persuade the Dalai Lama to leave that very night, but the Dalai Lama still hesitated, as he explained,

> One night Chemmo [Phala] came to me. The interpreter Ngawang Senge [alternative name for Lobsang Yeshe], who had earlier gone to study at Beijing and had later joined Chushigangdru, crossed the Ramagang ferry site one night and went to see Chemmo. So then Chemmo came to see me and said if His Holiness leaves right now, everything is ready. The Khambas are there on the other side [of the Yarlungtsangpo] and there are no Chinese. However, I said I cannot go now. No divine lottery had been done. And I think the Oracle had said that it would be terrible, and it will not be good if His Holiness left Norbulinga at this moment. So I said that I cannot go.[40]

The Dalai Lama also added in another interview, "Earlier, one night [Phala] came to see me, and said now we are ready to go, but I said no! It was not yet finalized in my mind. I needed two or three days, then I go. Not finalized from my side."[41]

Since the Dalai Lama still refused to leave, it was decided that Lobsang Yeshe should return to Lhoka, taking some arms and ammunition from the government's armory with him so that the soldiers and Khambas there could better defend the ferry sites along the Yarlungtsangpo River. "Major" Jabo, who was involved in this weapons transfer, explained how that was done.[42]

> On the 6th of the 2nd month (15 March), Lobsang Yeshe took 10 rifles, 2 Bren guns and 10 trunks of ammunition from Norbulinga. I went [with him] to bring these to Nyetang's Norbu Gang and handed them over to [Chushigandru's] Künga Samden, who was from Litang. On that night, it had been planned to take the Dalai Lama, but we were unable to do that. Therefore, I was sent to bring the guns to Nyethang with 7 soldiers and the dobdo servant of Lobsang Yeshe.[43]

Just after this, the Dalai Lama received what would be the final letter from Tan Guansan on the seventh (16 March). It was the toughest letter to date, threatening that the Dalai Lama had better take action to put down the rebellion or the Chinese will. But it also still treated him as a progressive and told him he could come to the Military Command Headquarters with his staff for his safety if he could get away and wanted to come. And it said that the start of the Second National People's Congress would take place in a month in Beijing. This meant that if the Dalai Lama chose to stay, he would very soon be able to discuss Tibet in person with top leaders like Mao and Zhou Enlai. Tan's letter, however, which had been written on the fifteenth, was accompanied by a very disturbing enclosure from Ngabö.[44]

---

[40] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.

[41] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.06 (English uncorrected).

[42] In the Tibetan army, *major* [Tib. me car] was a term used for officers of the shengo rank who were in charge of a platoon of twenty-five soldiers.

[43] Jabo, interview, India, 1993, H.0028.01.

Tan Guansan's letter said:

> Respected Dalai Lama:
>
> I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your two letters dated March 11 and March 12. The traitorous activities of some reactionary elements among the upper social strata in Tibet have grown to intolerable proportions. These individuals, in collusion with foreigners, have engaged in reactionary, traitorous activities for quite some time. The Central People's Government has all along maintained a magnanimous attitude and enjoined the local government of Tibet to deal with them in all earnestness, but the local government of Tibet has all along adopted an attitude of feigning compliance while actually helping them in their activities, with the result that things have now come to such a grave impasse. The Central People's Government still hopes that the local government of Tibet will change its wrong attitude and immediately assume responsibility for putting down the rebellion and mete out severe punishment to the traitors; *Otherwise the Central People's Government will have to act itself to safeguard the solidarity and unification of the motherland.*
>
> In your letter, you said; "As to the incidents which were brought about under the pretext of ensuring my safety and have seriously estranged relations between the Central People's Government and the local government, I am making every possible effort to deal with them." We warmly welcome this correct attitude on your part.
>
> We are very much concerned about your present position and safety. *If you think it necessary and possible to extricate yourself from your present dangerous position of being held by the traitors, we cordially welcome you and your entourage to come and stay for a short time in the Military Area Command Heaadquarters. We are willing to assume full responsibility for your safety.* As to what is the best course to follow, it is entirely up to you to decide.
>
> In addition, l have much pleasure in informing you that it has been decided that the Second National People's Congress will open its first session on April 17.
>
> *Salutations and my best regards,*
> *Tan Kuan-san*
> *March 15, 1959*[45]

Ngabö's letter is not available, but the Dalai Lama said that it was frightening, because it implied that the PLA was now about to open fire with artillery on Norbulinga. The Dalai Lama explained,

---

[44] Dalai Lama 1990, 135.

[45] *Peking Review* (31 March 1959): 11 (emphasis added).

> In the same envelope with the general's letter was another sent to me by Ngabö. He had not attended any Cabinet [Kashag] meetings since the crisis started. Now he wrote to warn me that he did not think that there was much chance for peace. He suggested that I should try to "destroy the hostile designs of the reactionaries, and cut all my connections with the people's leaders." He said he gathered that the people had an "evil plan" to remove me from the Norbulinga. If that was true, it would be very dangerous for me, because the Chinese had taken the strictest measures to prevent my escape. And even if I did escape, he said, in the present international situation I would never be able to return to Lhasa. And then he said: "If Your Holiness with a few trusted officers of the Bodyguard [regiment] can stay within the inner wall [of Norbulinga] and hold a position there and inform General Tan Kuan-sen exactly which building you will occupy, they certainly intend that this building will not be damaged."[46]
>
> He [Ngabö] wrote to the Cabinet too, more or less repeating what he had written to me, while urging them to get the people [mimang] away from the palace, or at least to see that they stayed outside the [yellow] walls. He said he understood the difficulties, and if they could not make the people go, they should try to take me out of the palace and into the Chinese camp for my own safety. Meanwhile, they should send a sketch map of the Palace showing the position of the building I was occupying.[47]

In the Dalai Lama's later autobiography, he additionally said of this,

> Ngabo's [letter] . . . made clear what I and everyone had dimly concluded, namely that the Chinese were planning to attack the crowd and shell Norbulinga. He wanted me to indicate on a map where I would be so that the artillerymen could be briefed to aim off [away from] whichever building I marked. It was a horrifying moment as the truth sank in. Not only was my own life in danger, but the lives of thousands upon thousands of my people now seemed certain to be lost. If only they could be persuaded to go away, to return to their homes. Surely they could see that they had demonstrated to the Chinese the strength of their feelings? But it was no use. They were in such a pitch of fury against these unwelcome foreigners with their brutal methods that nothing could move them. They would stay till the end and die keeping guard over their Precious Protector.[48]

The Dalai Lama responded by sending Tan Guansan another faux letter that sought to buy more time by saying that after a few days he would be able to come to the Chinese Military Headquarters for safety. That letter said:

---

[46] Dalai Lama 1977, 190–91.

[47] Ibid., 191.

[48] Dalai Lama 1990, 135.

> March 16.
>
> Dear Comrade Political Commissar Tan:
>
> Your letter dated the fifteenth has just been received at three o' clock. I am very glad that you are so concerned about my safety and hereby express my thanks.
>
> The day before yesterday, the fifth day of the second month according to the Tibetan calendar (14 March 1959), I made a speech to more than seventy representatives of the government officials instructing them from various angles, calling on them to consider seriously the present and long-term interests and to calm down, otherwise my life would be in danger. After these severe reproaches, things took a slight turn for the better. Though the conditions here and outside at present are still very difficult to handle, I am trying tactifully to draw a line separating the progressive people among the government officials from those opposing the revolution. In a few days from now, when there are enough forces that I can trust, I shall make my way in secret to the Military Area Command Headquarters. When that time comes, I shall first send you a letter. I request you to adopt reliable measures. What are your views? Please write me often.
>
> *The Dalai*[49]

Regarding these faux letters, the Dalai Lama explained,

> Reluctantly, I set about replying to Ngabo and General Tan, saying something along the lines that I was dismayed by the disgraceful behavior of reactionary elements amongst the population of Lhasa. I assured them that I still thought it a good idea that I should move to the sanctuary of the Chinese headquarters, but that it was very difficult just at the moment; and that I hoped they too would have the patience to sit out the disturbances. *Anything to buy time!* After all, the crowd could not stay put indefinitely. I took care not to say where I was, with the hope that this lack of knowledge would cause uncertainty and delay [their opening fire at Norbulinga with artillery].[50]

In his later autobiography, the Dalai Lama commented on this again.

> I replied to the general's letter in much the same way that I had written to him before. It still seemed to me that the only chance of persuading him not to attack the crowd and the Palace was to seem to fall in with his wishes. I did not tell him which building I was in. I still felt that so long as the Chinese did not know exactly where I was, there was still some chance they would not use artillery; if we told them, it seemed certain that the rest of the Norbulinga would be laid in ruins. I told him again that I would come to his camp as soon as possible. I had no intention of going, but I hoped that this promise would persuade him to delay his order to attack and enable us to get the people away in time. That was the last of the letters I wrote to him.[51]

---

[49] *Peking Review* (31 March 1959): 11.

[50] Dalai Lama 1990, 135–36 (emphasis added).

[51] Dalai Lama 1990, 191.

After receiving the Dalai Lama's letter sent on the sixteenth, Tan Guansan prepared a fourth letter for the Dalai Lama, but before it was sent, the situation changed dramatically.

The Dalai Lama also described the worsening atmosphere at that time in Norbulinga,

> The whole atmosphere round the palace by then was extremely tense. Outside its inner [yellow] wall was a vast multitude of excited angry people. Most of them had armed themselves with sticks, spades or knives, or whatever other weapons they could muster. Among them were some soldiers and Khambas with rifles, a few machine guns, and even fourteen or fifteen mortars. Hand to hand, with fists or swords, one Tibetan would have been worth a dozen Chinese—recent experiences in the eastern provinces had confirmed this old belief. But it was obvious that their strength was useless against the heavy equipment which the Chinese could bring to wipe them out. Practically, they had nothing to fight with except their own determination to protect me.
>
> But within the inner wall, in the immediate precincts of the palace, everything had the appearance of calm and peace. There were no signs of anything untoward. The garden was quiet as usual. The peacocks strutted about with their plumes held high, unconcerned about the human turmoil; singing birds were flying from tree to tree, mixing their music with that of the fountains near the rock garden; the tame deer, the fish, and the brahmini ducks and white cranes were as placid as ever. A contingent of my bodyguards, out of uniform, were even watering the lawns and flower beds. The atmosphere was still typical of Tibet, where for centuries people have sought for peace of mind and devoted themselves through their religion to finding the path towards freedom from sorrow and suffering.
>
> On the sixteenth of March, news began to come in of more Chinese preparations for destroying this peaceful place. People reported to the Cabinet, and thence to me, that all the artillery in the district was being brought in to sites within the range of the city, and of Norbulinga in particular. A man who worked on a hydroelectric plant which was being built about eight miles east of Lhasa reported that four mountain guns and twenty-eight heavy machine guns which were usually kept there had been secretly taken to Lhasa during the night of the fourteenth, escorted by several truck loads [of] Chinese soldiers. A district official from Bomtue, fifteen miles east of Lhasa, told us of twenty heavy guns which had been sent toward the city. On the evening of the thirteenth, and again on the fifteenth, two giant Chinese military vehicles with three soldiers in each were found near the northern gate of the Palace with mechanical instruments, apparently taking measurements. When they saw that the people were watching them, they hurriedly drove away, and the people's guards who saw them jumped to the conclusion that they were taking the measurements for ranging heavy guns on the Palace. In the night a hundred new Chinese trucks were seen moving slowly toward the Potala, and from there to the Chinese camp. On the following morning, fifteen or twenty Chinese in civilian clothes were seen perched on telegraph poles, apparently mending the wires, but the people concluded they

> were taking more readings for range finding. Our people did not know much about artillery and they may have been wrong, but that was what they believed. These were read by the Tibetans as Chinese preperation for an attack on the Tibetan position.
>
> Besides all these observations, there were also rumours of fresh troops arriving from China by air. . . .[52]

Chinese documents show clearly that the Chinese were indeed making a major effort to enhance their military preparations, but in their view, it was still only defensive. One Chinese source, for example, mentioned a convoy of three armored vehicles that went around the Potala and Norbulinga on the sixteenth to see the defenses and measure the firing distances. Shan Chao, who was in one of these vehicles, explained, "We decided to take a look around Norbulinga. The rebels were building fortifications there. We set out in a big armored car with two accompanying smaller ones, one in front and one behind us."[53]

Consequently, as mentioned earlier, it is easy to see how Tibetans, who were not planning to launch an attack at that time, would have interpreted such actions as preparations for an offensive attack by the Chinese against them.

Chinese sources report that also on the sixteenth, Tseja Thubden Lengmön was sent to the Indian Consulate to send a telegram to Shakabpa in Kalimpong (to Jenkhentsisum) in the name of the "Tibet Independence Conference," that is, the assembly in Shöl. It informed Shakabpa that on 10 March, Tibet's independence had been declared, and asked that he and Jenkhentsisum's Tibet Welfare Society should inform the international community about this. This telegram said,

> Kalimpong, Shagab-ba, to be forwarded to
> the Society for the Cause of Tibetan Welfare:
>
> Independent state of Tibet already established on first day of second month [10 March], Tibetan calendar. Please announce this to all. Please go to Gangtok to receive telephone message on 18 March.
>
> *Signed*
> *Tibet Independence Conference*
> *7th day of second month, Tibetan calendar [16 March]*
> *Sent by TZechhag Khanchung [Tseja Khenjung,*
> *i.e., Thubten Lekmön].*[54]

On 17 March [the eighth of the second month], the night that the Dalai Lama actually left, a second more detailed telegram was sent to Shakabpa, this time in the name of the People's Congress of the Independent State of Tibet. It is not known who took this message to the Indian Consulate, but it was sent after the Dalai Lama left. The telegram said:

---

[52] Dalai Lama 1977, 191–93. Actually, the cannons of the main artillery regiment in Trip on the south side of the Lhasa River did not have to move because their shells could reach Norbulinga easily.

[53] Shan Chao 1950, 22.

[54] "Kalimpong: A link between Tibetan Rebels and Indian Expansionists," *Peking Review* 2, no. 18 (5 May 1959): 7.

> Kalimpong, Shagob-ba Tzepon, to be forwarded to
> the Society for the Cause of Tibetan Welfare stationed in India
>
> Recently, on the first day of the second month, Tibetan calendar [10 March], all Tibetans, high and low, clerics and laymen, unanimous in their will, declared they are standing up from under the power of red Communist Party of Hans and establishing an independent state. [You] should make propaganda about this in your place. The Han government is already preparing large-scale suppression in areas surrounding Lhasa. This being likely, to avoid the weak being swallowed by the strong, please report to government of neighbouring country, India, Buddhist Conference, United Nations to send delegates here immediately to inspect the real situation. Also please find ways to wire Indian representatives in Lhasa who should know the situation beforehand. In short, it is better to seek support by some means. Please carry on with all efforts in the spirit of past knowledge of the situation. Also please send information [to us] inside.
>
> *Signed*
> *Plenary Meeting of People's Conference*
> *of Independent State of Tibet*
> *Eighth day of second month, Tibetan*
> *calendar.*[55] *[17 March 1959]*

However, this Chinese published telegram omitted a critical sentence that told Shakabpa that the Dalai Lama had left Lhasa. Wang Gui, a Chinese cadre in the intelligence office who was also Tan Guansan's secretary, said in an interview with the author that the full telegram also contained the sentence, "*That person* has already left" [Ch. na ge ren yi jing zou le; Tib. mi de nor bu gling ga nas thon song]. So the Chinese analyzed this and guessed that "that person" meant the Dalai Lama. Wang Gui explained further,

> Q. How did the PLA get the telegrams?
>
> A. We could get that message from our telegraph station [Ch. dian tai], because it was sent as a plain code [Ch. ming ma dian bao] telegraph and not as a secret code telegraph [Ch. mi ma dian bao]. . . .
>
> Q. At around what time did you get that telegraph?
>
> A. It was around 12 A.M. or 1 A.M.[56]

This, therefore, must have been sent just after the Dalai Lama left. In the meantime, the Kashag tried to buy time by sending another deceptive note to Ngabö in code telling him (and therefore the Chinese) that the Dalai Lama is getting ready to secretly come to the Chinese military headquarters. This communication is not available, but the Dalai Lama explained its contents,

---

[55] Ibid.

[56] Wang Gui, interview, Beijing, 2012, H.0012.01 (emphasis added). The times given in Chinese interviews are Beijing times, which were two hours later.

> By the night of the sixteenth, the people were certain that the Chinese were about to shell the Palace, and that danger might come without warning at any moment. Their feelings rose to a state of panic, but they still would not leave the Palace and abandon it and me. Everyone in authority tried to pacify them, but their fury against the Chinese was uncontrollable. For the crowd and for my ministers and myself, that was a very disturbed night, and nobody could sleep.
>
> When morning [17 March] came, rumors were still springing up and spreading, and destruction still seemed imminent. It seemed to me and my Cabinet [Kashag] that the situation was completely desperate. We held a meeting. There was only one question to discuss: how could we prevent the destruction of the palace [Norbulinga] and the massacre of the thousands of people around it? We could only decide to make another appeal to the Chinese general not to use force to disperse the crowd, and to wait until the Cabinet had tried again to persuade them to leave in peace. So the Cabinet hurriedly wrote a letter to Ngabö to this effect. They said that the people were acting foolishly and under the stress of emotion, but there was still hope that they could be persuaded to leave the palace in the end. And they also suggested that Ngabö should help them to take me to the Chinese camp. They pointed out that this would be very difficult, because the whole area round the palace was controlled by the people, but they said they would do their best. They sent a special code with the letter and asked Ngabö to use it to reply, because the popular [peoples'] guards round the Palace had started to censor any letters which came into their hands. The sole purpose of that letter, of course, was to conciliate the Chinese general. In fact, it would have been quite impossible for me to have gone to the Chinese camp. I would indeed have been willing to go and throw myself on the mercy of the Chinese if that would have prevented the massacre of my people; but the people would never have let me do it.
>
> It was very difficult to send that letter, because the popular [mimang] guards were on alert and would not allow officials to leave the palace. But one of Minister Shasur's attendants succeeded in slipping out, pretending he was going shopping in the city, and he managed to deliver the letter to Ngabö.[57]

On 17 March, Phala also decided it was time to contact the Indian Consulate and inform them that the Dalai Lama might need to flee to India, so he sent Tregang Khenjung, a trusted monk official who was living with Kundeling at that time and was the brother of Tsipön Shakabpa in Kalimpong, to see the Indian Consulate General, Major S. L. Chhibber.

Tregang recalled,

> On the morning of March seventeenth I went to the meeting of the assembly at the Shöl Parkhang, which had been going on for a few days. While there, a messenger

---

[57] Dalai Lama 1977, 193–94.

> arrived saying that I should immediately come to Phala's house in Norbulinga after 12 P.M. When I arrived there, Phala said to me, "I have a very important job for you. You were previously posted at Phari, so you know the Indian political officer well, so now I need you to go to Dekyilingka and see the Indian Consul General, who was my old friend."[58]
>
> I knew Major Chhibber from when I was staying in Phari. We used to eat together in Yadong and we also gambled together. I also used to go to Dekyilingka to see him. Major Chhibber also knew Kundeling and the Drönyerchemmo (Phala). When Phala summoned me, I went to see him and he told me, "If you could, please go to meet Major Chhibber tonight. If the Dalai Lama keeps staying in Norbulinga like this, we can't bear the risk that a disturbance will occur in Norbulinga, so we are thinking that it would be better to take him to Lhoka. And in case he can't stay in Lhoka, please tell Major Chhibber to ask for permission from the Indian government for the Dalai Lama to come to India." . . .
>
> When he [Chhibber] saw me, he was smiling and invited me to come in and drink some tea. I said no thanks, and told him, "I have an important message to tell you, so call Yaba la [his translator]. . . . Then I told Yaba la, "Drönyerchemmo Phala sent me to tell you that the situation has become very tense. Because Chushigandru is in Lhoka, he is going to take the Dalai Lama to Lhoka. But in case Lhoka is not stable, he might have to take him to India. Therefore, please ask for permission from the Indian government for the Dalai Lama to come to India." He said, "Yes, I will ask for permission for this right away through the wireless."[59]

Also on the seventeenth, a short reply arrived from Ngabö that acknowledged the kalöns' note, in which "he said he was pleased at the Cabinet's proposal that I should be moved to the Chinese camp and promised to send a detailed answer later."[60] While the Dalai Lama and the kalöns were discussing Ngabö's comments at about four o'clock, they heard the boom of two mortar shells fired from a nearby Chinese camp, and then the splash of the shells in a marsh outside the northern gate.[61]

These explosions added immediacy to the arguments imploring the Dalai Lama to leave before it was too late. Fortunately for him, this was not the start of a Chinese offensive but instead was the unauthorized act of a disturbed Chinese officer working at the nearby Transportation Bureau compound. Wang Gui explained the circumstances of this act:

---

[58] Paljor Tsarong, telephone conversation with Changkyim (Tregang) in 1997.

[59] Changkyim, (Tregang), interview, USA, 1992, H.0036.01. Changkyim clarified in a phone call that he did not specifically ask the Indians for asylum for the Dalai Lama (Changkyim (Tregang) phone conversation, 17 May 1997).

[60] Dalai Lama 1977, 194.

[61] Ibid.

> The Qinghai-Tibet Highway Transportation Station was located on the west side of Lhasa between Norbulinga and the Potala.[62] There were many of our militia there. They didn't wear military uniforms, but they had been given rifles and machine guns, because the situation was tense. There were also many discharged soldiers [Ch. fu yuan jun ren] working in the Transportation Station. . . . Their duty was to do self defense [Ch. zi wei] and guard [Ch. fang shou] their own unit. They were not allowed to go on the attack. . . .
>
> The Transportation Station was located at a very crucial point and was like the throat between Norbulinga and the town of Lhasa, so Chushigandru wanted to wipe it out because the rebels had to pass by this Transportation Station and it was not convenient for them to move around there [Ch. xing dong bu fang bian]. . . .
>
> In that transportation office there was a security officer [Ch. jingji jingcha] named Zheng Huishan, who violated the law [Tib. trimgey] because Chushigandru had fired a great many shots there on 16 and 17 March, and there was a danger that the gasoline containers in the Transportation Station would catch fire. They [the Tibetans] fired several hundred shots from the Potala. Zheng, therefore, was angry and violated the law, which stipulated that we could not open fire against them, but he [ignored that and] fired two small (60 mm) mortar shells against Norbulinga. . . .[63] This was at 2–3 P.M. on the seventeenth.
>
> Q. Did he just fire these on his own?
>
> A. Yes. This was against the rules, because the Tibet Military Command Headquarters had said it is not permitted to open fire (on Tibetans), but he fired anyway. These two mortar rounds didn't reach inside Norbulinga and fell about 100 feet outside of the wall. However, because of this, Surkhang, Shasur, Liushar, and Phala said, "Now, the Chinese have fired canons against Norbulinga, so the Dalai Lama is in danger," so they insisted that the Dalai Lama leave on the seventeenth.[64]

These two shells were taken as dramatic evidence that the Dalai Lama had to leave now before it was too late, and he agreed in principle. However, despite the increased danger and consensus on fleeing, this was still Tibet, and even after those shells were fired, the Dalai Lama still had to consult the State Oracle Nechung about whether he should leave. Kundeling explained Nechung's prophecy,

> On the eight [17 March], the Nechung Oracle was once again invoked by the Dalai Lama and a divine lottery was also conducted. Both now said it was good to go. The final prophecy [of Nechung] was profound and clear and mentioned, "Now, it is the time for my Great Teacher, His Holiness, to depart from Norbulinga," and it also mentioned the date of departure and the time, as well as the route he should take. . . .[65]

---

[62] In Tibetan: mtsho bod mo tra'i 'gro lam lha sa'i 'grim 'grul las khungs [Ch. qing zang gong lu yun shu zhan]. This was situated northeast of Norbulinga near where the Lhasa Middle School is today.

[63] The 60 mm mortar [Ch. liu ling paiji pao] was the PLA's smallest.

[64] Wang Gui, interview, Beijing, 2012, H.0120.01.

[65] Kun bde gling (Kundeling) 2000, 220.

However, actually, another powerful protector deity, Shungden, had also secretly been consulted. A few days before the Dalai Lama left Lhasa, when the Dalai Lama and his two tutors were discussing whether to go or stay, it was suggested that it may be a good idea to consult the Panglung (Shungden) oracle, who is located in Nyara valley just north of Lhasa. The two tutors agreed, but the question arose as to how to consult him in secrecy without anybody knowing about it. Either Trijang Rinpoche or both of the tutors suggested that Ratö Rinpoche, who was a student of both tutors, be sent to consult the oracle. Ratö Rinpoche agreed. When Ratö and his manager (Chantsö) arrived there, quite a lot of other people were waiting to consult the oracle, so he asked all the others to leave and closed the door. Then the oracle came into trance and replied that His Holiness should leave before the tenth [19 March]. Ratö Rimpoche returned that same day in the evening and reported this.[66]

On the eighth (17 March), therefore, the protector deities and divine divination had finally given their agreement for the Dalai Lama to flee from Lhasa, and at 10 P.M. that evening the implementation of the plan for the Dalai Lama's escape began. Phala had stationed some Trapchi Regiment troops at key spots along the route and at the ferry site. He also was concerned that if the Dalai Lama used the big wooden ferry at Ramagang, he would have to go with many people, horses, and mules, which would take more time and be more chaotic and dangerous, so he prepared a brand-new coracle and a boatman with a bodyguard and placed them at a distance of two hundred yards above the ferry site, where there were no people passing by.[67] And then the Dalai Lama, still harboring reservations about whether he was doing the right thing, left Lhasa with his entourage.

THE ESCAPE

Phala had organized the escaping group into three sections. The first group consisted of the Dalai Lama's mother, sister, and brother. They were then staying in the headquarters of the Bodyguard Regiment, which was just outside the south wall of Norbulinga. They were the easiest to take, since they didn't have to walk through the Norbulinga palace grounds. Phala had told Kundeling to send Tseja Gyentsen, Phala's trusted monk official/conspirator, to be in charge of them. They were taken by car to Kundeling's house where they changed into common folk clothing and waited for the others in the entourage to arrive, at which point all would make the final short trip to the Ramagang ferry site.[68]

---

[66] Ratö Labrang Chantsö, interview, India, 1992, H.0049.01. Shungden is a very sensitive subject because the Dalai Lama has banned his worship in exile, so when this question was raised in an interview, Ratö Rinpoche's Chantsö (manager) asked that we turn off the tape recorder when he spoke about this because, as he put it, "this won't quite be in accordance with the Dalai Lama's wishes." When we asked the Dalai Lama about this, he said that contacting Shungden was the idea of the two tutors, not him. He explained, "There was another deity. I had no connection with this. This was connected with Trijang Rinpoche, and I think it was Panglung Gyechen [another name for Shungden] or something. . . . In this prophecy, most probably it dealt mostly with Trijang Rinpoche's leaving. It said that he should not stay and that it would be very dangerous if he did (Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07. Wherever the idea for this originated, the Dalai Lama clearly did not tell his tutors *not* to contact Shungden.

[67] Kun bde gling (Kundeling) 2000, 220–21.

The second group consisted of the Dalai Lama, Phala, Gadrang, and Taklha. Phala was worried that if these well-known members were suddenly seen on the evening of the eighth (17 March) leaving Norbulinga in everyday clothing instead of their normal fancy brocade robes, people there would quickly conclude that they were fleeing. Consequently, for several days before that, he and Gadrang dressed up in common clothing and went along with some soldiers at 10 P.M. to inspect the guards at the various parts inside and outside the Norbulinga wall, so that when the real escape occurred, others in Norbulinga would not think anything of seeing these high officials walking around out of their brocade gowns/robes at that time of night. The second group, therefore, were able to leave without notice.

The third group consisted of the two tutors, the three kalöns each with a servant, the singa (monk bodyguard), and the Dalai Lama's three personal attendants, each also with a servant. Since there were so many in this group, Phala decided to take them from Norbulinga to Kundeling's house in one of the Tibetan government's trucks. This would not seem strange, because such trucks had been transferring arms from the arsenal in the Potala to Norbulinga for several days. For this trip, they made sure the truck had a canvas covering, so people could not see into it and would assume it was just another arms or supply shipment.

The Dalai Lama has written in detail about his actual escape,

> When everything was ready [to go], I went to the chapel of Mahakala. I had always gone to that chapel to say good-by when I went on long journeys, Monks were still there, offering their constant prayers, and they did not know what was about to happen; but I offered a scarf at the altar as a symbol of farewell. I knew they would wonder why I did so, but I also knew they would never express their surprise.
>
> As I came out of the chapel I met my Drönnyerchemmo Senior Chamberlain [Phala] and the Chief Official Abbot [Gadrang] and Kusung Depon. The Chamberlain and the Abbot were already dressed in ordinary laymen's clothes. They had been wearing them whenever they went out for several days, but I had never seen them dressed like that before. We had agreed to meet at the gate in the inner [yellow] wall at ten. We synchronized our watches. Then I went to several other chapels and blessed them, and then to our own rooms; and I waited there alone.

---

[68] Ibid., 224.

While I waited for the time to come, I knew that my mother and my sister and my small brother would be leaving: we had agreed that they should be the first to go. It was easier for them than the rest of us to leave the Palace, because they had been living outside its inner yellow wall. My mother and sister were to be dressed as Khampa men. I was to go next, and the Cabinet ministers, my tutors, and a few others were to make the third and final party.

A soldier's clothing and a fur cap had been left for me, and about half past nine I took off my monk's habit and put them on. And then, in an unfamiliar dress, I went to my prayer room for the last time. I sat down on my usual throne and opened the book of Lord Buddha's teachings which lay before it, and I read to myself till I came to a passage in which Lord Buddha told a disciple to be of good courage. Then I closed the book and blessed the room, and turned down the lights. As I went out, my mind was drained of all emotion. I was aware of my own sharp footfalls on the floor of beaten earth, and the ticking of the clock in the silence.

At the inner door of my house there was a single soldier waiting for me, and another at the outer door. I took a rifle from one of them and slung it on my shoulder to complete my disguise. The soldiers followed me, and I walked down through the dark garden which contained so many of the happiest memories of my life.

At the garden gates and the gate of the inner wall, Kusung Depon [Taklha] had told the guards to disperse. He met me at the first gate, and my other two companions at the second. As we passed the holy library near the Mahakala Temple, we bared our heads in homage and farewell. We crossed the park together, towards the [south] gate in the outer wall, the Abbot [Gadrang] and the Chamberlain [Phala] and the Commander of the Bodyguard [Taklha] in front, and myself and the other two soldiers behind them. I took off my glasses, thinking that people would hardly know my face without them.

The gates were shut. My Chamberlain went on ahead and told the guards he was going on a tour of inspection. They saluted him, and opened the massive lock.

Only once before had I been out of the gate of the Norbulinga without a ceremonial procession. When we reached it, I saw dimly in the darkness the groups of my people who were still watching it, but none of them noticed the humble soldier, and I walked out unchallenged towards the dark road beyond.

On our way down to the river, we passed a large crowd of people, and my Chamberlain stopped to talk to their leaders. A few of them had been warned I was leaving that night, but of course the crowd in general did not know. While they talked, I stood and waited, trying to look like a soldier. It was not pitch dark, but I could not see well without my glasses, and I could not tell whether people were looking at me with curiosity or not. I was glad when the conversation ended.

We came to the river bank above the crossing place [the Ramagang ferry site] and had to walk down it on white sandbanks interspersed with dark clumps of bushes. The Abbot was a big man, and he had chosen to carry an enormous sword, and I am sure he was ready to do destruction with it—at least, he adopted a very threatening attitude at every bush. But none of them concealed an enemy.

We crossed in coracles. On the other bank we met my family. My ministers and tutors, who had come out of the Norbulinga hidden under a tarpaulin in a truck, also

> caught up with us there. About thirty Khamba soldiers were waiting for us, with three of their leaders: Kunga Samden, Temba Thargye, and a brave boy of only twenty called Wangchuk Tsering. A boy called Losang Yishi [Lobsang Yeshe] was also there. He was one of the boys who had been taken to the school in Peking but had resisted Chinese indoctrination for the whole of the five years he was there. He died fighting two days later.
>
> We exchanged scarves with these leaders. They had arranged everything as well as anyone could in the circumstances. The steward of the monastery [Kundeling] had collected ponies for us all, although he had not been able to get any good saddles. After hurried greetings in low voices, we mounted and rode off without delay. The first few miles were likely to be the most dangerous.[69]

Phala and the Kashag also took measures to convince the people left in Norbulinga that the Dalai Lama and the Kashag were still there and functioning. Gyegyepa, the Kashag's secretary, recalled getting instructions about this from Kalön Surkhang just before the Dalai Lama and his entourage left. Surkhang told him in great secrecy that the Dalai Lama was leaving, but he had to remain in Norbulinga to act as if the kalöns were still there. Gyegyepa explained his instructions,

> On the ninth [he means the eighth, since Dalai Lama fled on the eighth] at about ten o'clock in the evening, the kalöns told me, "Now whatever will happen, it is not good to stay here like this surrounded by the mimang. It is not certain whether the Chinese will cause a disturbance [go on the offensive]. If a disturbance flares up, the Chinese will fire artillery shells here. Then it is finished. Cannon shells have no eyes, so for the time being, the Dalai Lama and the Kashag are moving the capital to Lhoka. All of the retinue of the Dalai Lama have to take a very strong oath not to tell this to anyone. We should be taking you with us, but we have to leave you so no one will realize we kalöns have gone. If people realize that we are gone, there is a great danger, so temporarily you have to stay here. We will do something soon. [Former] Sitsab Lobsang Tashi will come and do everything as if the Kashag were still here, and you should report the things and pass down the orders." This was on the eighth. I said, "Whatever happens, take me with you. It is my duty to bring and keep the Kashag's seal. It is not at all okay if it would become a situation where the lord/master could get through, but the servant couldn't get through.[70] So please take me." Surkhang, however, insisted, telling me, "This is a critical responsibility, so you must stay here. If this secret gets out, it is finished." So I said, "If it's like this, I'll stay." So when many people came to meet or give requests to the kalöns on the ninth [18 March]. We said they [the kalöns] had gone to report to the Dalai Lama. Since I was there, people believed this.[71]

---

[69] Dalai Lama 1977, 197–200.

[70] In Tibetan: pön tharne yog mathar.

[71] Gyegyepa, interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0011.02. Gyegyepa was arrested after the uprising and spent roughly the next twenty years incarcerated in Lhasa.

THE CHINESE AND THE DALAI LAMA'S DEPARTURE

Despite the efforts at secrecy, the Chinese were informed of the Dalai Lama's impending departure on the seventeenth by Ngabö. Before this, Li Zuomin, who played an important role, explained that as a result of the Dalai Lama's last letter to Tan Guansan in which he indicated he wanted to come to the Chinese Military Headquarters, the Chinese were not sure whether the Dalai Lama was really ready to come to them, and they were discussing this. Li Zuomin explained,

> In the third letter he [the Dalai Lama] sent to Tan Guansan, he wrote, "In Norbulinga, I am gathering a group of people who listen to my orders and when it becomes reliable, I am taking these people and going to a place that is safe and near Norbulinga. At that time, I will give a signal to the PLA at the appropriate time, so please send people to protect me outside." This letter duped [us]. When he fled, it was at twelve midnight on the seventeenth of March.[72] He departed from Norbulinga and he went through the Ramagang ferry site and went in coracles and crossed the river. This is what we saw. When he [Dalai Lama] told us to send people to receive him [to come to their Military Headquarter's compound], we were like hesitating whether to believe it or not. Actually, at around 9 P.M. on the seventeenth of March, I knew that the Dalai Lama was going to flee that night at 12.
>
> Q. How did you know that?
>
> A. I had friends among the government officials (Tib. kudrak).[73]

In another interview, Li explained further,

> Q. You said that . . . you learned about that [the Dalai Lama's flight] after a Tibetan official send you a message that the Dalai Lama is fleeing. Did you receive a phone call or a letter?
>
> A. . . . Ngabö called me at my office and said, "I just heard from a trustworthy person who said, 'The old man is being sent tonight.'"[74] This meant that this kid is going to leave at midnight. Ngabö said, "This is probably true, and after he leaves, the war will start right away as they [the rebels] will attack us. So report this to the Political Commissar [Tan] as soon as possible." Later, I learned that the person who gave the message to Ngabö was Göshampa [a progressive aristocratic official].[75]

Li Zuomin also explained what happened after he received this information,

> Anyway, at 10 P.M. I knew that. At that time, from the place where I have my office to Tan Guansan's residence in the Military Area Headquarters, an underground tunnel had been built, so when I went out from my office, I reached the west gate of the

---

[72] As we saw, he actually left at 10 P.M. Lhasa time, which was midnight Beijing time.

[73] Li Zuomin, interview, Beijing, 2011, H.0053.04.

[74] In Tibetan: thogong powo dringgire.

[75] Li Zuomin, interview, Beijing, 2011, H.0053.06.

> Military Area Headquarters. . . . When I went through the tunnel it took about seven or eight minutes and it left me right near the door of Tan Guansan's office. I didn't need to call him, because I could go there and tell him what I heard [about the Dalai Lama leaving].
>
> Q. What did Tan Guansan say when you said that?
>
> A. At that time, Tan Guansan was not in his residence where he had his phone. He was in a hall holding a military meeting, because at that time the disturbance had already started. There were only three PLA regiments in Lhasa then, and he had called the regimental commanders and the political commissars of these for a meeting. When I reported that information, all the military officers were there.
>
> Q. How many people were there in the meeting?
>
> A. A little less than twenty people were there. . . . Then Tan Guansan told me, "You must report whatever you know to the Central Military Commission [Ch. junwei]. If you report it, it will be clearer and more certain [than if I do]." At that time, the telephone from Tan Guansan's office was directly linked to the Central Military Commission [in Beijing], and I heard them right away when I picked up the phone. Then I made the report about what happened.
>
> Q. Did you personally make the report?
>
> A. Yes. I did. They [the Central Military Commission] asked, 'Is this reliable and certain [Ch. ke kao pa; Tib. lö khebo rebey/ denden rebey]?' I said, "It is certain." Then they told me to stay on the phone for ten minutes and we will give you the answer. After just seven or eight minutes, they said "Let him go!" [Ch. rang ta zou; Tib. ko drochug/ ko dongsho].[76]

This fits with what we saw was sent in cables earlier; namely, that it was okay if the Dalai Lama left. Li Zuomin continued his narration of the Chinese side of the events that fateful night,

> They [the Central Military Commission] said, "Send people to keep a close watch and see which direction the Dalai Lama is going. Just watch. Do not move at all [to do anything]. Tomorrow we will send you the written order with a 4 A designation."[77] According to the Chinese custom, if they send a telegram with 4 A, this means there is a special connection and it is special top secret [Ch. te ji mi]. . . . This was said through the telephone. Zhongyang was saying that on the phone.[78]

Li Zuomin said that he then went to watch secretly as the Dalai Lama was going to the ferry site, and could see him though his binoculars.[79] His narration continued,

---

[76] Ibid.

[77] In Tibetan: ta la'i bla ma'i 'gro phyogs gang yin sgrung shog/ lta shog/ lta shog ma gtogs 'gul skyod gtan nas ma rgyag/ sang nyin yig thog gi bka' e bzhi yod pa zhig btang yong.

[78] Li Zuomin, interview, Beijing, 2011, H.0053.06.

[79] Ibid.

> Q. Did they receive that [top secret telegram] the next day?
>
> A. Yes, they received it at around seven or eight o'clock. I didn't see it. Later, Tan Guansan told me briefly that the order had said, "Let him go. Don't stop him."[80]
>
> Q. This was the order from the Central Committee (Ch. Zhongyang), right?
>
> A. Yes.[81]

Li Zuomin added that the telegram explained Mao and the Central Committee's reasons for letting the Dalai Lama leave,

> On the one hand, if we go to stop him, since the Tibetan kudrak are very tricky they will first kill him and put the blame on us, saying that the PLA killed him. If this happened, no matter whether we [later] publicize a hundred times or a thousand times, the masses will think that this was done by the Chinese and the CCP, and they will not think that they themselves did it. And the masses will not forgive us. This is a key issue for developing Tibet and doing whatever work we will do for Tibet. It will cause harm [to our work going forward]. This was the main reason.[82]

Although the idea that the Tibetan kudraks would kill the Dalai Lama is ridiculous, Beijing was certainly correct in being concerned about harm befalling the Dalai Lama as he fled. If the Dalai Lama was killed while the Chinese were trying to stop him, the Tibetans would indeed have blamed the Chinese, and this would have created inexorable hatred among not just the elite, but among all the masses. And so, while the Dalai Lama and his entourage were fleeing from Lhasa to Lhoka, the Chinese, on instructions from Beijing, were quietly watching them depart and, as instructed, did nothing to prevent this.

The Dalai Lama's escape to exile in India is examined in chapter 14.

---

[80] Li said in Tibetan: ko dongsho/ ma ga.

[81] Li Zuomin, interview, Beijing, 2011, H.0053.06. One Chinese source, Yang Shangkun (2001, 367), says that the 19 March entry in his diary stated ". . . According to the report from the Tibet Work Committee, the Dalai Lama had already escaped to the south on March 16th or 17th." In other words, it suggests that the Politburo did not know the Dalai Lama had already fled on the seventeenth. I suspect that Yang either did not remember exactly which day he left whenever he got around to actually writing his diary entry so said both, or that a mistake was made when the diary was edited years later. All the other evidence indicates they knew he was fleeing on the seventeenth.

[82] Ibid.

14

Over the Cliff

TO LHOKA

Late in the evening on 17 March, as soon as the Dalai Lama and his entourage crossed the Lhasa River, they mounted the horses Kundeling had waiting for them and set off south to Lhoka. They had encountered no problems so far, but they still didn't feel completely safe, as the Dalai Lama explained,

> There was no road over there [going south], only a narrow stony track which skirted across a hill over the [Lhasa] river. To the right we could see the lights of the Chinese camp [at Nortölinga opposite Depung along the river]. We were easily in [their] range, and there was no telling what patrols they had posted along the dark banks of the river below us. Even closer we passed an island where the Chinese constantly drove trucks to collect stones from the quarry—even at night. If one of them came we would be caught in the headlights. The track was hardly visible as we rode along it. The clink of the horseshoes on the stones seemed very loud. We thought patrols might hear it, but we had to hurry. I lost the track once, but had to turn my pony and go back. Then we saw flickering torches behind us, and it seemed for a while that the Chinese were close on our trail. But it was Tibetan soldiers, trying to guide some others of our party who had taken the wrong track and lost their way completely.
>
> But we all passed that danger spot successfully and met again on the riverbank about three miles downstream. Below that point, the river was so shallow that trucks could be driven across it, and if the Chinese had been alerted they might have driven down the other bank and cut us off there. So one of the officers and a few soldiers were left there as a rearguard. The rest of us rode onward steadily, away from the city, into the quiet empty countryside.[1]

---

[1] Dalai Lama 1977, 201.

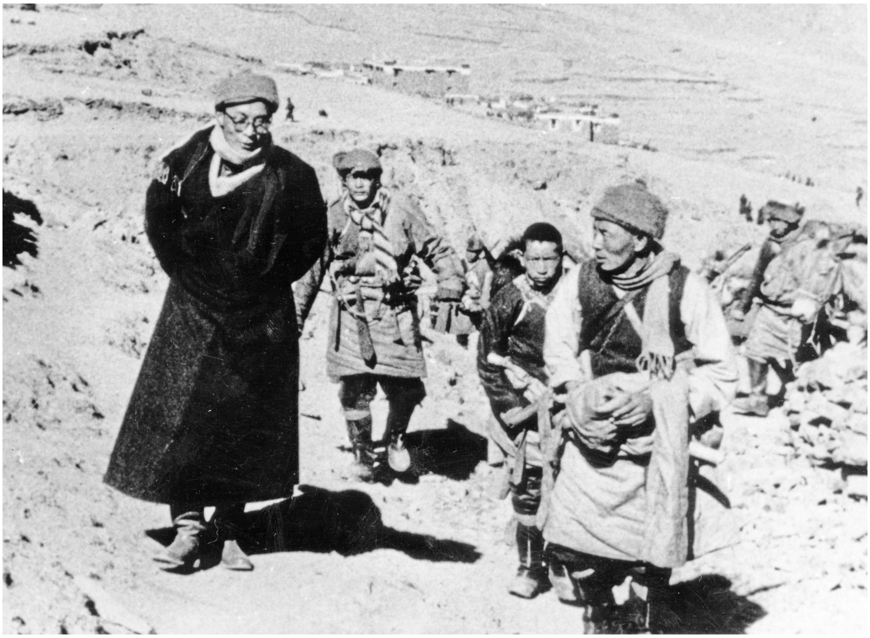


FIGURE 10. Dalai Lama escaping from Tibet (with Chushigandru fighters), 1959. Courtesy of Photographic Archive, Demton khang Center.

The Dalai Lama and his officials, as mentioned earlier, had no idea that Beijing had already instructed Tan Guansan to let him go.

The Dalai Lama and the others continued on horseback all night and reached the Chela Pass ("Sand Pass") early the next morning on the eighteenth (figure 10). From there they descended to the Yarlungtsangpo River and crossed it to reach Lhoka. However, not long after they started south, the Dalai Lama paused to compose a letter for Norbulinga. Temba Söpa, a monk official who was in the escape group, recalled that just before they reached the "Sand Pass," his relative Kundeling told him to deliver a letter from the Dalai Lama to Tara Khenjung, one of the top leaders of the Command Center. So while the rest went ahead, Tempa Söpa stayed overnight at Neu Dzong and early the next morning set out for Norbulinga, where he gave the letter to Tara. There is no copy of this letter, but Temba Söpa said the letter was not sealed, so he read it and recalled that it said the Dalai Lama was going to stop in Lhüntse Dzong and that a Katsab and a Sitsab [acting heads to be in charge of the government in Lhasa during his absence] had been appointed. The letter also told them that you should pursue peaceful talks [with the Chinese].[2]

---

[2] Temba Söpa, interview, India, 1994, H.0038.02.

Kundeling also read the letter and recalled that it did not mention Lhüntse; instead it said, "I will stay in some border area and will discuss [the situation] with the Chinese."[3] Tara, the recipient of the letter, also recalled vaguely that it said something like, "For the time being, His Holiness is going to Lhoka and he will advise you from there. Do not resort to any kind of violence and try to calm the situation as much as possible."[4]

This letter, therefore, informed the small group of Tibetan government officials and mimang who had been part of the flight preparations that the Dalai Lama had escaped safely with his entourage and were on their way to southern Tibet. This news of his successful escape was welcome, but it raised a difficult issue regarding whether all the others in Norbulinga and Shöl should be informed about this, and if so, when? Maya, one of the lay officials who had known about the escape, said there was a difference of opinion among the assembly leaders about this. He explained,

> A few representatives . . . said now we are sitting and having this meeting here, but if the Chinese attack us, Norbulinga and the Potala will be destroyed. So instead of just waiting here for that to happen, if we announce that His Holiness has left Lhasa, those who wish to catch up with His Holiness's party could do so, and those who wish to go home could also do so. This, they said, would also probably make the situation more peaceful. Others, however, said that this is absolutely not acceptable, because His Holiness is traveling on horseback and the Chinese will go either in cars or planes [so they might be able to catch up with him]. Therefore, if we let this secret out now, his life will be in danger, so until His Holiness has left [completely], even if he is not here, we have to pretend that he is. The secret cannot be revealed.[5]

That view prevailed, so no one was told that the Dalai Lama had successfully escaped. Thus, the assembly delegates and the Command Center kept on meeting, and the Kashag and the Dalai Lama's Secretariat pretended to function as normal. The Dalai Lama, in an interview, expressed some regret about this,

> I told Chenmo (Phala) and Gadrang that if possible, after I leave, it would be good if you can move the people at Norbulinga south to the banks of the river. If possible, this should be started from tonight [the seventeenth], [or] if not, from the next night.
>
> But nobody told anybody. I still sort of have regrets about this. If they could not have started the movement that night [the seventeenth], or at least from the next night, one to two thousand people could have been removed towards the Tsangpo [Lhasa river], so the cannons that the Chinese had lined up [ready to fire] at Norbulinga would have been upset.[6]

---

[3] Kundeling Dzasa, interview, India, 1992, H.0067.01.

[4] Tara's comment came during an interview with the Dalai Lama.

[5] Maya, interview, India, 1995, H.0039.08.

[6] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.

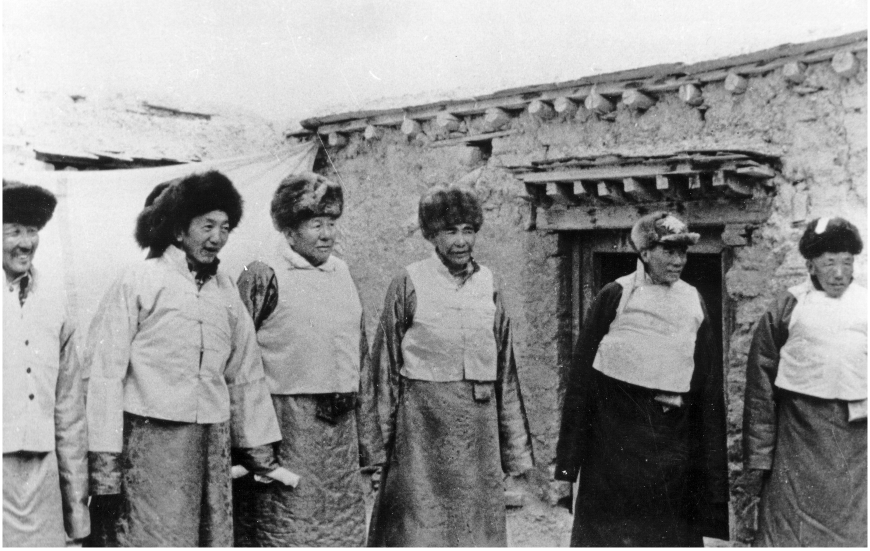


FIGURE 11. Some leading officials during the flight to India, 1959. *Left* to *right*: Kalön Liushar, Kalön Surkhang, Kalön Shasur, Jigyab khembo Gadrang, and Ta Lama Jawteng. Courtesy of Photographic Archive, Demton khang Center.

The Dalai Lama explained that after he left Lhasa, he created an ad hoc committee of the top officials who used to meet with him every night to discuss the situation (figure 11). It consisted of Kalöns Liushar, Shasur, and Surkhang, as well as Gadrang, Phala, Jawdang, Phüntso Tashi, and his attendant Simbö Khembo.[7] However, despite the Dalai Lama's thoughts about notifying those left behind, the others thought it would be more prudent to continue to keep the Dalai Lama's flight a secret, so they did not instruct Tara to tell everyone the good news. As a result, when the battle for Lhasa started on 20 March, Norbulinga was filled with defenders who suffered heavy casualties from Chinese artillery. Had they been informed that the Dalai Lama was in Lhoka on the eighteenth or nineteenth, they would likely have left Norbulinga, since there was no one there to defend, and not only would these casualties have been avoided, but tensions would have been dramatically reduced and the battle for Lhasa itself might have been avoided, because the Chinese probably would not have opened fire if Norbulinga was empty of "rebels."[8]

---

[7] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1994, H.0019.03.

[8] For example, one young aristocratic official who was at home when the fighting started learned that the Dalai Lama had escaped only on the third day of the battle for Lhasa when Mingyiling, an official who was captured, was made to speak on Chinese broadcasts and said that "the Dalai Lama has already left" (Shelling, interview, USA, 2003, H.0430.02).

This raises the issue of how and why the Chinese decided to open fire on 20 March. Chinese sources claim they opened fire only after they came under a full-scale attack by the Tibetan rebels, and while this is what their troops and officers apparently thought, it is certainly incorrect.

As discussed in chapter 13, during the three days between when the Dalai Lama fled and when the battle for Lhasa started, the level of tension and anxiety in Lhasa was extremely high, with both sides believing that the other was on the verge of attacking. And while it was true that many, if not most, Tibetans would have liked to drive the Chinese out of Lhasa (and ultimately Tibet), the reality was that Tibetans in Lhasa, including the Tibetan army, had no plans to launch a military offensive in Lhasa to accomplish this and no arrangement had been made to bring the several thousand Chushigandru fighters to Lhasa to launch a coordinated attack. Moreover, as we saw, the letter the Dalai Lama sent back to Norbulinga instructed those in Norbulinga and Shöl to pursue a peaceful course of action. So while the Tibetan army sent some of its troops to occupy and defend important military locations such as the Jogpori Hill, the Potala, Norbulinga, and the Tsuglagang Temple, they had not sat down to work out an offensive battle plan.

Moreover, many officials in Lhasa were very negative about the feasibility of fighting the Chinese. For example, Laja Tempa, a monk official in Norbulinga at that time, recalled,

> The situation was such that we had to do something, right? But there was nothing for us to do. From the beginning, we had nothing, right? So in one or two days, even if we did something, what could we do? We had to do something, right? We just went through the motions of doing something, but there was nothing to be done. So we tried to do our best. [On the other hand,] the Chinese, from early on, were always prepared.[9]

And Kundeling, one of the heads of the Norbulinga Command Center, had an even dimmer view of a military option to defeat the PLA,

> There would naturally be those who had hopes [of fighting the Chinese] and those who did not. I did not have any hope at all. I thought that it would be great if we could just quietly get to India and then start putting our asses on the ground and start looking around and saying something [taking political action]. If we did that [fought the Chinese], a lot of people would get killed and dead bodies would pile up. They would pounce on us in one fell swoop. That's exactly what I used to think. [Although] I went with guns and soldiers to protect His Holiness, I never thought about fighting the Chinese.[10]

---

9. Laja Tempa, interview, India, 1993, H.0018.03.

10. Kundeling, interview. India, 1992, H.0067.01.

Many, however, while doubtful of achieving success *going it alone,* hoped the United States would intervene. For example, a young aristocratic official named Tsewang Namgyal, looking back, recalled,

> I didn't think that they [Chushigandru] could cope with the PLA until the end [until gaining victory]. At that point, we were thinking it was good that they were making war, and we had the empty hope that there would be help from America. I was holding out hope until I was imprisoned. That was really an empty hope.
>
> On the tenth of March, the demonstration took place. At that time, although the Chinese hadn't completely eaten [taken over] Tibet, the situation had become very tense. At that time, I used to look at the sky many times, hoping that some American plane might be flying from the south. Later, we came to know that there was nothing from America. Many Tibetans were not thinking that the Chushigandru exclusively could defeat the Chinese, but were holding an empty hope that we would receive support from America and the British.[11]

Similarly, such thinking was also prevalent among the Tibetans in Kaliimpong, For example, a well-known monk official who had been sent to co-head the Trade Office in Kalimpong in the mid 1950s also believed foreign military assistance was coming through the work of Jenkhentsisum (JKTS) with foreign countries. When asked, "Did those who were in Kalimpong really believe that they were able to get independence, or was it just to oppose the Chinese and make things difficult for them, he replied,

> Yes, there was such hope. Even if all of us Tibetans were to get together, there was no hope, right? But when JKTS was working from the outside, I recall thinking that some war assistance would come from the outside. At that time, we did not think about how much some country could get involved in another or was permitted to do so. And even if one country did get involved, then what advantages were they going to look for practical politics? I remember thinking that military assistance would come.[12]

The Chinese side, however, interpreted the Tibetans actions from 10 March on differently. Wang Gui, a Tibetan-speaking intelligence officer, conveyed the Chinese perception of the situation in Lhasa as follows,

> On March 18, the rebels openly posted an announcement at the city center that was signed by "The People's Enlarged Assembly Meeting of the Tibet Independent Country." They were very arrogant. During the daytime of March 19, the rebels continued to force the Tibetan women in Lhasa to "parade and protest." The rebels also destroyed telephone lines, blocked transportation, and besieged Chinese work units. There were very few people out on the street, and the Lhasa residents locked them-

---

[11] Shelling, interview, USA, 2003, H.0430.01.

[12] Shingsar, interview, India, 1993, H.0069.07.

> selves inside their homes. The Tibet Military Headquarters could only use walkie-talkies to communicate with the [Chinese] government offices in the western suburbs. There were almost no people on the street after darkness. Lhasa was shrouded in an atmosphere of terror.[13]

But more than anything else, the Chinese felt vulnerable, because they believed they were badly outnumbered. At this time, there were about 2,500 regular Tibetan army soldiers in Lhasa, but the Chinese believed that when the mimang (the Lhasa residents and Khambas in Lhasa) were also counted, the total number of "rebels" in the city increased to about 7,000.[14] And, of course, there were several thousand more armed and experienced Chushigandru guerrilla forces nearby in Lhoka who could have been called to join in an attack, so the Chinese believed they could be attacked by around 10,000 rebels.

By contrast, Chinese sources report they had just two PLA infantry regiments, the 155th and the 159th, and these were not at full strength so totaled only about 1,300 combat troops [Ch. zuo zhan bu dui], rather than the 6,000 they would have had if they were fully staffed. In addition there was a third regiment, the 308th artillery regiment, and some small units like a security battalion attached to the military headquarters.[15] There was also an armored vehicle company and a demolition platoon (Ch. pai), but these were small.[16] Consequently, the total number of PLA troops in Lhasa was probably only about 2,000–2,500.[17] The Chinese side, therefore, considered themselves engulfed in a sea of thousands of angry Tibetans who wanted them out of Tibet, and had stationed soldiers and rebels on the Jogpori Hill that commanded the city, as well as at the nearby Potala and Norbulinga Palaces. The Chinese fear was that they might not be able to hold out against a sudden, coordinated attack by so many "rebel" Tibetans forces who, as mentioned above, had also received weapons from the Tibetan government's armory in the Potala. Consequently, the general feeling among other Chinese on the ground in Lhasa was that their best military strategy was to act proactively and attack the Tibetans first.[18] This, however, was not possible, because Beijing had clearly instructed the PLA to hold their ground and only make extensive defensive preparations so they could resist any Tibetan attack until reinforcements could arrive, even if that took many months. The Chinese, therefore, worked energetically to strengthen their defenses, while continuously worrying about the danger of being overwhelmed by a sudden large-scale attack.

---

[13] Wang Gui 2003, 193.

[14] Wang Gui, interview, Beijing, 2012, H.0120.01; Wen Feng 1999, 194.

[15] Wang Gui, interview, Beijing, 2012, H.0120.01.

[16] Chen Bing 1989, 20.

[17] Wang Gui, interview, Beijing, 2012, H.0120.01. Of course, there were also armed militia.

[18] Ibid.

Moreover, on another level, just as most Tibetans hated the presence of Chinese army troops in their city, most Chinese troops and cadres hated having to act cordial to the Tibetan elite, who they considered feudal exploiters of the masses, as well as to the Lhasa residents who harassed them on the street, shoving and spitting at them. They were eager to be able to teach the Tibetans a lesson. So angry emotions were present on both sides.

This volatile situation boiled over late in the evening of 19 March, when PLA headquarters in Lhasa received a report that Tibetans had fired on PLA troops near the Ramagang ferry site and that this was the start of an all-out military offensive to drive them out of Lhasa. A Chinese source explained this,

> Very early in the morning of 19 March [means the early morning of the twentieth], the Tibetan Military Headquarters [PLA] held an emergency meeting for the heads of all units above the level of battalion. . . . The meeting was held in Tan Guansan's small meeting room and was presided over by deputy commander Deng Shaodong. Tan Guansan briefed the audience about the situation in Lhasa and issued mobilization calls, asking all troops to start mobilization right after this meeting. He emphasized that we should not open fire first, but should expose their guilty activities amply, evoke the support of the Tibetan people, and be militarily conservative. We should wait until the condition is ripe [to attack] so that we can exterminate all of the armed rebel forces. . . . At that time, there were about 40,000 rebels that were publicly participating in revolts all over Tibet, and in Lhasa there were about 7,000. They had occupied the Jogpori Hill, Norbulinga, the Potala and the Jokhang Temple. The various offices of TWC and the Military Headquarters had been surrounded by the rebels. The situation was very tense. . . .
>
> Tan Guansan and Deng Shaodong gave instructions that the Lhasa ferry site should be controlled so that the rebels could get out of Lhasa, but not come in [to the city]. Afterwards, Wu Chen, the vice commander of the 159th regiment, was ordered to lead a company to take over the Oxtail Hill which was near the Ramba [Ramagang] ferry site on the Lhasa River.[19] At 12 A.M. that night, Wu Chen took the seventh company of the third battalion to march to the Oxtail Hill. Tan Guansan, Deng Shaodong, and Zhan Huayu were all waiting for news inside the underground command office. All of the officers of the Combat Department were discussing the situation, making plans, receiving intelligence developments on the situation, and were replying to the questions raised by subordinates. It was not until 2:50 A.M. that the phones in the Combat Department stopped ringing [from different units in Lhasa].
>
> At 3:40 A.M., gunshots were suddenly heard from the river. These were heard very clearly all over Lhasa during the quiet night. Deng Shaodong jumped out of his chair and took up the phone. Wu Chen was on the other end of the line, and he asked him, "Why did you fire?" Wu Chen replied: "The rebels fired at us." "Who fired first?"

---

[19] It is not clear what the Chinese "Oxtail Hill" refers to, as there is no hill with that name near Ramagang. The only hill near the ferry site was the small, well-known hill called "White Bird's Droppings" [Tib. chagya garpo].

Deng Shaodong asked anxiously. “The rebels,” Wu Chen answered affirmatively. Tan Guansan took the phone and spoke in his thick Hunan accent: “Wu Chen, I must tell you that this question is very important and I am going to report it to the Central Committee, so who fired the first shot, and how was it fired? You go and check this immediately to clarify the situation and report back to me right away.”

After getting to the hilltop, Wu Chen was told by the commander of the third platoon that while they were climbing up the hill, they had come across some rebels. The rebels shouted at them, but they could not understand them, so they paid no notice of that and kept on going. That was when the rebels fired at them. Wu Chen immediately reported to Tan Guansan and told him that they had taken over Oxtail Hill and the ferry site was also under their control.[20] One or two minutes after that skirmish broke out, reports arrived that the rebels in Lhasa city had started a full-scale attack on our besieged offices. The sound of gunshots was overwhelming.

Consequently, [on the twentieth] at 5 A.M., Tan Guansan held another emergency meeting to discuss whether or not to go on offense, since the rebels had opened fire first [and they were allowed by Beijing to fight back defensively]. Most comrades argued strongly that they should go on the attack now. . . . However, one important issue that was raised was what happens if the war starts [if the Chinese attacked] and cannot exterminate the major rebel forces? . . . After analysis, it was unanimously agreed that although the rebels outnumbered them, they were a scattered and ragtag group who fought well individually but lacked centralized commander leadership and were weak at coordinated combat. So they decided that as long as they took advantage of these weaknesses, it was possible to exterminate them one by one. The key was that they have to act rapidly and coordinate well between the troops.[21]

Tan Guansan then asked Deng Shaodong, “What do you think?” Deng Shaodong responded that “You are the Secretary [the top leader], so you should make the decision. I will take charge of the command and the coordination. I guarantee that [a success].” Tan Guansan thought for a moment and looked around at the attendees who were all looking at him expectantly. Now there was no time to hesitate, and Tan banged the table lightly with his fist. It looked like he had made an important decision. He stood up and said with rare anger that, “You all have made very good points just now and it seems that an armed conflict in Tibet is unavoidable. It is not that we want to fight, but they are forcing us “to go to mountain Liang [to fight].”[22] We exercised our patience when the elite reactionary clique of the Tibetan local government abducted the Dalai Lama and did all kinds of bad things in the Dalai Lama’s name, as well as when the rebels committed all kinds of crimes. We have compromised again and again, reasoned with them and showed them sympathy, hoping they would lay

---

20. Ji Youquan (1993b, 94–107), however, describes a more lengthy battle for control of the ferry site.

21. Wen Feng 2009, 9–10.

22. To force somebody “to go to mountain Liang” (Ch. bishang liangshan) is an old Chinese proverb. It means that some unbearable/unjust thing happened, so some people have to do something unusual to resist/rebel.

> down their weapons. We have done whatever we could do, but they did not give us face. They took our patience as a sign of weakness, and used their guns against us. So we can do nothing but retaliate, and retaliate resolutely.
>
> Then Tan Guansan analyzed the situation in Lhasa saying, "Currently there are around ten thousand rebels, but they are a ragtag group. They are not good at fighting. So although we only have two regiments that are not even fully staffed and thirteen companies, these are troops that are very experienced, so we are able to break through their besiegement and exterminate them one by one. In this way, we have a good chance to achieve a complete victory. So then Deng Shaodong made detailed arrangements. Tan Guansan finally added, "Our combat principle has always been, "We do not [start to] fight, but when we do, we should be victorious. We must completely and entirely exterminate the rebels in Lhasa."[23]

The PLA, it should be noted, unlike the Tibetan rebels, had developed a well-integrated attack plan that they had been training and collecting intelligence for, so tactically, they were ready to go on the offensive against the Tibetans if ordered. Their attack plan had three general phases,

> In the first phase, the 159th [infantry] regiment, under the covering fire of the artillery regiment [at Trip], would attack the Jogpori Hill and cut relations between it and the Tibetan forces in the Potala Palace. In the second phase, the 155th regiment would attack Norbulinga from the east and the west. In the third phase, the 155th regiment, the 159th regiment, and the security battalion would attack the enemy in the city.[24]

At 6 A.M., Tan Guansan sent his plans to the Central Military Commission in Beijing asking for permission to launch a full-scale attack. However, to his surprise, no reply was received for hour after hour, so at 10.05 A.M., Tan decided to wait no longer and took it upon himself to order the PLA forces to lauch the full-scale attack.[25] Wen Feng continued his account,

> This was a decisive moment. At such an emergency time, when the main leaders of the TWC and the (Tibet) Military Headquarters were not in Lhasa [the article was referring to Zhang Guohua and Zhang Jingwu being in Beijing], Tan Guansan had taken full responsibility of both the political leadership and the military command.
>
> . . . Tan Guansan and his comrades probably did not realize at that moment that their decision would change the development of modern Tibet to a certain degree. The sound of explosives firing a few hours later in Lhasa was the death knell of the dark, backward, and brutal feudal system, and the salute to the birth of a democratic, free, prosperous, and happy Tibet. . . .

---

23. Wen Feng 2009, 10–11.

24. Chen Bing 1989, 21.

25. "Tan Guansan's self confession, 23 March 1959," in Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu weiyuanhui dangshi yanjiushi 2011, 248–49.

> At 10:05 A.M., three signal flares of red, green, and white that were fired from the military headquarters lit up the ancient city of Lhasa. The artillery regiment then started a violent bombardment of the rebels on Jogpori Hill. The bombs fell precisely on Jogpori, and white smoke rose up from there. At the same time, it was announced [via loudspeakers] to the Lhasa people that the battle to put down the revolt had started.
>
> The battle progressed smoothly, and at 11:56 A.M., we took Jogpori Hill, which was the commanding point overlooking the [our] military headquarters and which cut off the connections between the rebels in the western suburbs and the city center. The first battle was won.[26]

An article by a Chinese infantry soldier added, "At 10:05 A.M. on the 20th, our attack began on Jogpori with artillery fire. This lasted for 1 hour and 25 minutes. Then my second battalion of the 159th regiment began our infantry attack at about 11:25 A.M. We were able to take Jogpori Hill by 11:56 A.M."[27]

Wang Guozhen, the commander of the third company of the 308th Artillery Regiment, also described the opening bombardment by his regiment in the battle for Lhasa,

> Taking Jogpori Hill was very important, because from it you can see all that is going on to the north at the Potala, and all that is going on in Ramoche and the Tsuglagang, and you can block the Qinghai road and cut the road from Norbulinga to the city. If you take the Jogpori hill, you could also give corrective information to our artillery regiment across the river [at Trip] regarding where the shots were landing. . . . [So] our first action in the military plan was to take Jogpori Hill. At exactly 10 A.M. [on the twentieth] we started firing. We fired forty-two cannons [shells] at once, each directed at different parts of Jogpori that were predetermined [from the intelligence they had collected]. The Jogpori hill was covered with smoke, and rocks were flying up. Then the Tibetan defenders fled and we fired at them as they were fleeing. Our soldiers were happy and yelled, "Now revolt, now you revolt." We fired artillery for over an hour. Right after this, the infantry yelled a war cry and attacked the hill. . . . The 159th regiment's second and fourth battalions and their fourth company reached the top of Jogpori and put up the flag. It took less than one hour to reach the top. I also went to the top of Jogpori to examine how the artillery shells had landed. They had completely destroyed all the [Tibetan's] fortifications. From the top of Jogpori, you could see the activities of the entire enemy.[28]

Wang Guozhen explained what they did next,

> After taking Jogpori, the troops descended and we turned our artillery to face Norbulinga. . . . we opened fire at Norbulinga. There were 3 companies that rotated

---

[26] Wen Feng 2009, 11.

[27] Chen Bing 1989, 21.

[28] Wang Guozhen 1989, 38.

> firing. There were over 5,000 people in Norbulinga. Most were people from Amdo, Kham, and Yunnan who had fled to Tibet. They were strong and courageous, and they liked the old customs and were not afraid to die.
>
> We had measured out the distances, et cetera, and had divided the area into specific sections and had assigned these sections to different companies. The defenders thought that since they had many people and many guns and high walls they could win. They were insistent and fired at us. Therefore, when we attacked, they were like turtles stuck in the mud—they could not move, they were stuck there. So we closed the door and beat them like you would a dog [that can't escape]. Then the defenders couldn't stay inside anymore because their defensive bunkers were destroyed and they fled from inside [Norbulinga]. When they reached the outside, there was no place to stay there either, and we continued to fire at them. I was on the Jogpori Hill with binoculars. On the south side of Norbulinga, there were still over 1,000 cavalry. No artillery shells had reached there, so I ordered 4 cannons to fire all together at that area. Then they opened the south door and ran toward the river (which faced the door). I also ordered the 4 guns to fire on them as they tried to escape. Then, since we had blocked the escape route, they started fleeing back, so I ordered [the artillery to] fire to where they were coming. So they couldn't go forward or backward, and while they were grouped together, I ordered the artillery to fire into them. All told, many men and horses were killed or wounded. . . . Then the remaining ones fled in all directions. Some fled into the parks around Norbulinga, so I ordered them to fire into there. So most of the enemy died like this from this artillery fire. So when our PLA [foot] soldiers reached the park, the Tibetans, by and large, no longer had the will to fight, but there was still some firing from them.
>
> In the north of Norbulinga there were also some fighters. I couldn't tell if they were defenders or people fleeing, but we opened fire on them with artillery. After we destroyed them, we took possession of Norbulinga and thus joined up [linked] the [PLA's] Tibet Military Headquarters and the Western military center (at Nortölinga). Then, in the middle of that night, we were ordered to start shelling Ramoche, Tshomönling, and the Tsuglagang. . . . We won the battle after 2 days of fighting. Our artillery regiment fired at 17 different targets in the 2 days of fighting.[29]

However, while the fight at the Jogpori Hill had been underway for an hour, at 11:03 A.M. Tan Guansan suddenly received a cable from Beijing regarding his 6 A.M. request for permission to launch a full-scale attack.[30] Wen Feng explained Tan Guansan's shock at seeing what it said,

> Tan Guansan took the telegram and looked at it. He suddenly saw the words "Do not take action [fight]" [Ch. bu yao dong]. He was shocked and could not believe his eyes. He examined it closely, but it still said, "Do not take action."[31]

---

[29] Ibid. His figure for the number of Tibetans in Norbulinga is far too high. Similarly, his claim of one thousand cavalry also seems exaggerated.

[30] Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu weiyuanhui dangshi yanjiushi 2011, 248–49.

[31] Wen Feng 2009, 11.

Tan Guansan composed himself and continued reading. It said that because the enemy outnumbers us, we might be forced into a disadvantaged position if direct confrontation happens, so we do not agree to the request to fight [to go on the offensive]. You should depend on the [defensive] fortifications and stick to them. You can reduce the defensive areas [consolidate them], and you should wait for the reinforcement troops to come from inland. It was signed "Peng Dehuai." It was signed by the National Defense Minister General Peng Dehuai. This was weighty.

A half an hour after this, Tan Guansan [also] received replies from the Central Committee and the Central Military Commission, and he saw that Mao Zedong's intention was also not to fight. Instead, Mao wanted him to keep all the rebels from leaving Lhasa and [also] to pretend that we were too weak to sustain ourselves. The goal was not only to make the rebels stay in Lhasa, but make them believe they could exterminate the PLA troops so that all the rebels will come into Lhasa. In this way, the reinforcements could exterminate the rebels from all over Tibet at once and also the ones from Yunnan, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Xikang, thus avoiding the difficult situation of having to deal with them individually all over Tibet in the future. Mao Zedong was concerned that if the rebels scattered all over Tibet, it would be hard to deal with them one by one.

After receiving the orders from Peng Dehuai and the Central Committee, Tan Guansan was nervous, and cold sweat was pouring out of him. He knew he had made a big mistake and that he had messed up Mao Zedong's strategy, that this action would complicate the situation in Tibet, and that this would be hard to explain to Mao Zedong. However, the battle had started and was underway, so what should they do? Should they stop? Deng Shaodong and Zhan Huayu were also stunned. It was as if there was a stone in their hearts.

After pondering this, Tan Guansan analyzed the situation once again. Of course, if we show our weakness and [now] stop our counterattack and depend on our fortifications for self-defense, while the rebels certainly cannot exterminate us, it is not certain that this would bring rebels in from all over Tibet to Lhasa so that we could destroy them all at once. According to the intelligence we have, the number of rebels who have come to Lhasa [from Lhoka and elsewhere] after the Dalai Lama's flight was not increasing. Nobody was certain whether the rebels would come to Lhasa to have a final battle with us. In addition, the rebels in Lhasa were only a ragtag group of people. Once they heard that the [PLA] reinforcements will be coming, they would certainly be scared away and then it would be even harder to deal with them [to deal them a final blow].

Tan Guansan, therefore, believed the best solution was to keep on fighting and to try to exterminate all the rebels in Lhasa by not letting them escape from Lhasa at all, or by reducing the numbers that could escape. However, since the enemy still outnumbered us, whether we could achieve this or not was still uncertain. Deng Shaodong and Zhan Huayu supported Tan Guansan, and said that they would take joint responsibility with him in doing this.[32]

---

[32] Ibid., 11–12.

Tan Guansan, therefore, reported the situation in Lhasa to the Central Committee and the Central Military Commission, telling them that due to an emergency, at 10 A.M. on 20 March he started to launch a full-scale counterattack against the rebels in Lhasa. These battles have gone well and the commanding site, the Jogpori Hill, was taken by us, he said, so we control the situation in Lhasa. Ji Youquan, described Mao's reaction to this news.

> When Mao Zedong found out that Tan Guansan had disrupted his plan, being angry, [Mao] said, Tan Guansan is becoming more and more stupid (Ch. hutu). However, since the battle has already begun, it would leave the PLA in a disadvantaged situation if [the PLA] stopped halfway; [so] they had to win. So Mao sent a telegram back, replying that he agreed that [PLA] could continue the battle, but instructed Tan Guansan that [the PLA] must win. It meant that, if Tan Guansan lost the battle, he would be punished by Mao Zedong.[33]

Tan then also received a response from the General Staff Department at 2 P.M. that said: "[We] agree to your counterattacking." It also confirmed the combat plan of the [Tibet] Military Headquarters. Tan Guansan, Deng Shaodong, and Zhan Huayu were greatly relieved.[34]

After Beijing learned that the battle had started and Mao's idea of trying to lure large numbers of rebels into Lhasa to enable a single grand battle had been ruined, the Central Military Commission took action to send reinforcements to enable the military option to start throughout Tibet. This was explained in a set of instructions sent on 20 March,

> Central Military Commission on the Deployment and
> Command of the Troops for Putting Down the Rebellion (Excerpts)
>
> [20 March 1959]
>
> According to the spirit of the Central Military Commission's instructions, the [PLA] troops in Tibet have decided to take action *ahead of schedule [Ch. tiqian xingdong]* to win more time in order to solve the revolt in Lhasa quickly. Meanwhile, in order to cooperate effectively with the troops in the Lhasa area, the [PLA] troops in Sichuan, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan should start the military action of quelling the rebellion *ahead of schedule as well.*
>
> 1. Timetable of Deployment
>
> The 134th Division should set off immediately after a short period to assemble in Golmud. It must arrive in Lhasa before March 30th.
>
> The 11th Division should set off immediately after a short period to assemble in Dunhuang. It must arrive in Lhasa before April 2nd.

---

33. Ji Youquan 1993b, 115.
34. Wen Feng 2009, 12.

> The 162nd Regiment should set off from Ganzi and arrive in Chamdo before April 2nd.
>
> The 130th Division should set off from Ya'an and assemble in Ganzi first and then arrive in Chamdo before April 10th.
>
> The 126th Regiment of the 42nd Division of the Kunming military district must march forward to the Yanjing area in the south of Chamdo before April 15th. . . .
>
> 3. In order to guarantee that the actions of 134th Division [will be successful] and that this division can arrive in Lhasa before the planned date of March 30th, the Branch Office of the People's Liberation Army's General Logistics Department stationed in Qinghai-Tibet [Ch. zonghou qingzang banshichu] should assign the best motor transport troops for this task.
>
> 4. Commandership
>
> The 134th and the 11th Divisions should be under the command of Commander Ding up to his arrival in Golmud. After that, Commander Ding will be under the command of the Tibet Military District.
>
> The 130th Division, the Chamdo Garrison and the 42nd Division should all be under the command of Commander Huang, who is still under the command of the Chengdu Military District.
>
> Relevant offices, please carry out the above instructions immediately.[35]

These reinforcements probably totaled over fifty thousand troops.[36]

The Central Committee also sent the TWC two other telegrams on 20 March. One of these told them to temporarily conceal the Dalai Lama's flight.

> Central Committee's Instructions to the TWC on Issues
> Including Temporarily Concealing the Dalai's Flight
>
> [20 March 1959]
>
> It is wonderful that the political situation in Tibet is now totally clear: the Kashag group has revealed its treason publically, the Dalai has fled, and the reactionaries attacked our defense positions. Conceal the Dalai's flight temporarily and do not categorize the Dalai as one of the leaders of the reactionaries yet. Only disclose that the reactionaries have arrested the Dalai. This might be helpful in case the enemy uses the Dalai's name to summon the masses for rebellion.[37]

Meanwhile, in Lhasa, by the end of the first day of fighting, Wen Feng summed up the rest of the short battle for Lhasa as follows:

---

[35] Xizang zizhiqu dangshi zhiliao zhengji weiyuanhui eds. 1995, 91.

[36] Mao Zedong gave a figure of fifty thousand to sixty thousand for all of Tibet including Ngari and Chamdo during a meeting with the Panchen Lama and Ngabö on 22 October 1959. In DPRC, "Chairman Mao's Conversation with Panchen, Phagbala, and Ngapo," 22 October 1959, in Qinzhengdian (a building in Zhongnanhai where Mao often met important visitors).

[37] Xizang zizhiqu dangshi zhiliao zhengji weiyuanhui eds. 1995, 89.

> On the evening of 20 March, the rebel base at Norbulinga was taken by us, and the majority of rebel forces were put out of commission [Ch. jianmie]. On the morning of 21 March, our army besieged the rebels in the city center and all the rebels in Ramoche were disabled. Seeing this, the rebels at the Jokhang and Potala wavered. At 9 A.M. on 22 March, by means of political persuasion and military strikes, the rebels at the Jokhang raised their khatas [white ceremonial scarves] indicating their surrender. Next, the rebels at the Potala surrendered their weapons and gave in. The quelling of rebellion in Lhasa had ended. It had lasted only 46 hours and 55 minutes. A total of 5,300 rebels had been put out of commission [Ch. jianmie], accounting for 70 percent of all rebels.[38]

Another Chinese source reported similarly, "more than 1,000 rebels were killed, and more than 4,300 rebels were captured."[39] And still another Chinese source also said a total of more than 5,300 rebels were disabled [Ch. jian], but says that only 545 were killed, and more than 4,800 were wounded or captured[40] It is hard to find Chinese sources that list PLA casualties, but one cites 273 PLA casualties, of which 63 were killed.[41]

The Tibetan government in exile has publicized a figure of 87,000 Tibetan deaths in the Lhasa revolt from March 1959 to October 1960 (in all of Central Tibet). This was based on a figure mentioned in a 1960 PLA document titled "Xizang xingshi he renwu jiaoyu de jihen" (Basic teaching materials on education on Tibet's situation and tasks), which was captured by Tibetan insurgents in 1966.[42] However, as is well known, the key term is *jianmie*, which means disabled or put out of commission, not killed.[43] However, even taking that meaning of jianmie into account, that figure of 87,000 is impossibly high. Consequently, at present it is not possible to know accurately how many Tibetans were killed in Lhasa, but 500–1,000 seems likely, given the current data.

On the Chinese side, notwithstanding Beijing's assessment that it was too risky to initiate offensive action to suppress the revolt in Lhasa before PLA reinforcements arrived, Tan Guansan's contravening of Beijing's instructions revealed that Beijing's caution was unwarranted. The battle to quell the uprising and take full control of Lhasa turned out to be very easy and quick and was a great victory for the PLA in Lhasa. The Tibetans were disorganized, poorly led, and had no realistic military plan. The Dalai Lama, in fact, indirectly spoke about that when he mentioned that later when the Indian Council General at Dekyilingka [the consulate in Lhasa], came to see him in India, he commented on the battle for Lhasa, saying,

---

[38] Wen Feng 2009, 12.

[39] Wang Zhongxing and Liu Liqin 2003.

[40] Zhonggong Xizang dangshi dashiji bianweihui 1995, entry for 22 March 1959.

[41] Ji Youquan 1993b, 121.

[42] DIIR, 1993; Ingram 1990, 356–57.

[43] Sautman 2006, 245.

"'So everything was without a plan (Tib. charshi mepa). They fought really hopelessly without preparations.' [Tib. mag kyopo shibuchi gyabsong. Tratri gyüni mey. mag kyopo shibuchi gyabsong]. He expressed like that."[44]

At the same time, the PLA had an even easier time with the other main Tibetan regiment located in Shigatse, since it surrendered on the twenty-first without a fight, as did smaller units in Gyantse and Yadong. Chape, who was a Tibetan official then in Shigatse, recalled the events there,

> Q. At the time the revolt started in Lhasa, what happened in Shigatse?
>
> A. When the revolt took place in Lhasa, all of the postal communications were cut off, and they made it so we could not hear anything from the local government [in Lhasa]. . . . [In Shigatse] for the first four days of the revolt, we did not know anything. Then one day, when we got up, we saw that there were PLA troops all along the hill behind Tashilunpo Monastery and they also were surrounding the Gadang [Shigatse] Regiment's Headquarters. At this time, the Chinese told the Shigatse district head and the commander of the regiment that it would be best if you surrender. If you try to cause trouble, it will be bad. You (the Gadang Regiment) have to turn over all your guns and ammunition. The Chinese officials called them and told them this. We did not know what was going on at the time. It was at this point that we learned that Phagpala [Khenjung] had been killed and that there had been a revolt. . . . The Chinese called the two district heads and Numa, the Gadang commander. The district heads didn't say anything and the commander agreed and turned over the arms and guaranteed that there would be no disturbance. Therefore, there was no fighting at all, and all the soldiers were just confused.
>
> Q. How many soldiers were there?
>
> A. There were about six or seven hundred soldiers in the regiment at that time. Their bullets were still in [storage in] the arsenal. They didn't know anything and didn't have time to distribute them. I heard that a few lieutenants had started to take out the guns and bullets, implying they were going to fight, but nothing came of it, as [Commander] Numa said it is better to surrender, since it makes no sense to try to fight and lose many lives. After they got the regiment's weapons, the soldiers on the hill [behind the monastery] withdrew as the monastery wasn't going to fight, so there was no trouble.[45]

Tan Guansan's impetuous action, therefore, had a major impact on Tibetan history. Had he followed orders and not opened fire, there would likely have been no "Battle for Lhasa." The Tibetan side certainly had no plan to launch a coordinated attack against the Chinese positions in Lhasa, so whatever early morning reports Tan had received from PLA officers of attacks, by noon on the twentieth, he would have known that the shooting or shootings were an isolated event(s), not the start of a large all-out attack. But he did not wait. He and his troops, basically, were itching to teach the Tibetans a lesson, and he did. However, had he obeyed Mao and the Central Committee's instructions, the uprising in Lhasa might have dissipated before the PLA reinforcements arrived ten days later. When the Tibetan officials and Lhasa residents eventually learned that the Dalai Lama had fled to India, there would have no longer been a reason to "defend" Norbulinga, and those guarding it would have likely returned to their homes, fled the city to follow the Dalai Lama, or tried to go to Lhoka to join Chushigandru.[46] Thus, there would have been no military reason for the PLA to bombard Jogpori and Norbulinga, or anywhere else. Tibet would have still undergone socialist reforms, but all the deaths and injuries would have been avoided.

---

[44] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 2004, H.0019.09.

[45] Chape, interview, Lhasa, 1992, H.0009.01.

After the battle ended, the PLA detained the thousands of Tibetans who had been captured or surrendered on the battlefield, holding them in a number of venues, for example, aristocrats and monk officials involved in the uprising in one or two places, mimang in another, and khambas in still another, while they began to assess who had been involved in the revolt and to what extent. The PLA also went house to house in Lhasa to collect all weapons and to detain almost all men they suspected might have been involved with the rebels. Those taken from battlefields like Norbulinga and the Potala received harsh treatment, and for those who were deemed reactionaries actively involved in the revolt, this was the start of fifteen or twenty years of prison and labor camps. The experience of famous aristocratic official Tsarong Dzasa, as written by his grandson, provides a glimpse of this.

> When the shelling began on the morning of March 20th, grandfather, the old soldier, had taken charge of the riffraff resistance below the Potala and had ordered the digging of trenches. But it was too late for trench warfare and the incessant barrage and the superiority of the Chinese firepower was no match. The Potala was hit several times and intermittently obscured by a cloud of its own red paint dust. To avoid further shelling of the palace and death in a hopelessly outgunned situation, grandfather had the resistance wave white scarves and surrender. . . .
>
> Grandfather, along with many ranking officials and others, about forty of them, were taken to the Chinese military headquarters. There they were searched and stripped of their pens, watches, official head knot and body amulets, rosaries and whatever belongings they had and were imprisoned in chains. Lhagyari Namgyal Gyatso, a descendant of Tibetan kings, had his hand chained with ex-minister Tashi Lingpa. Prime Minister Losang Tashi shared a hand chain with monk official Changra Khenjung. They each had leg chains and were locked up together. The leg chains proved to be too heavy for some, so they tied a string in the middle and pulled with their hands as they walked. . . . All in hand and leg chains were locked together in a large hall.[47]

---

[46] These are the choices the Tibetan people would have had if it had been announced on the eighteenth or nineteenth that the Dalai Lama had successfully escaped.

[47] Tsarong, undated ms.

Many did not get food for several days. Temba Söpa a monk official from Kundeling's household who was active in the uprising and was badly wounded in his leg, wrote of his capture in Norbulinga,

> At the door I saw many Chinese soldiers with guns and an officer in civilian dress. . . . He simply pointed his finger toward the main gate and asked me to go there. I slowly crawled toward the gate. There were about two hundred to three hundred Tibetans rounded up and surrounded by Chinese soldiers. I went into their midst and learned that they had been rounded up the day before. About an hour later, the officer in civilian dress came and separated the Tibetan government officials from the rest and told us to wait there. . . . The five of us [officials] spent the whole day waiting there. We had to urinate where we were sitting, as the soldiers did not allow us to budge. . . . [Later] a sweeper . . . took me on his back and carried me to the Prayer Room, which had apparently been turned into a temporary shelter for the injured. Although it was a large room, there were so many injured people that there was no space to stretch. The floor was a puddle of blood, and the room was filled with stench and groaning. . . . I was shivering with cold, and my body did not register anything. I looked around to find that less injured ones were pulling off the dead ones' clothes. I noticed an elderly person near me who was breathing heavily and who seemed badly injured. At about midnight he died, and I took off his overcoat. However, when I put it on, I found it was soaked with blood, and hence it was of little help.
>
> The next morning, the injured were each given a green-painted metal cup, black tea and tsamba. . . . My hands were red with blood, and there was no water to wash. I kneaded dough by mixing the black tea and tsamba, but it turned red from blood. Since I hadn't eaten for over two days, I had to eat the bloody red dough.[48]

Temba Söpa recovered and was imprisoned for the next twenty years.

THE INVESTIGATION OF TAN GUANSAN

Tan Guansan was elated about his decisive victory, but at the same time, he was also apprehensive, because he knew he had blatantly disobeyed the clear orders from the highest levels in Beijing, so the day after the battle for Lhasa was won, he sent the following self-criticism [Ch. jian tao] to Beijing.

> Report to the Central Committee and Central Military Commission:
>
> Before launching a counter-attack, we made a combat plan and sent it to the Military Commission at six o'clock [A.M.] on March 20, proposing to concentrate the troops and arms to attack the Jogpori Hill in order to occupy it first. However, before receiving a reply from the Military Commission, at 10:05 on the twentieth I ordered the troops to act according to the combat plan. At 11:03, we received a telegram from the Military Commission with instructions that said, "*Today the troops should not*

---

[48] Tenpa Soepa (Temba Söpa) 2008, 39–40.

> *attack or occupy the Jogpori Hill.* Rather, the troops should firmly hold all present bases and seize the right opportunity to occupy and then firmly hold the five [strategic] places Zhang Guohua mentioned in his telegram of the nineteenth." However, when we received this telegram, we were already in the middle of the battle. Moreover, afterward [after receiving it], we didn't stop the battle as instructed by the Military Commission. This was a serious breach of organization and discipline and a serious violation of the Central Committee's 8 April 1952 instructions that the "TWC should report [to] and consult [with the Central Committee] for every matter involving negotiations with the Tibetan side. Only after reporting and consulting, can the TWC deal with such matters." It was also [a serious violation of] the 16 August 1952 instructions that said, "Anything that needs to be reported and consulted must be reported on time. Do not take actions without the Central Committee's approval." [Thus] this was a very serious mistake. In order to learn a lesson, [I] therefore make this deep self-criticism and I am willing to receive any punishment the Party gives to me.
>
> *Tan Guansan*
> *1959, March 23*[49]

Tan's self-criticism, however, was not enough to satisfy Beijing. The Central Military Commission wanted to find out what really happened, so it sent a high-level team headed by General Hong Xuezhi to Lhasa to investigate Tan Guansan's disobedience and to report on how best to deal with it. Wang Gui was in Lhasa then and recalled that team's investigation,

> When they started investigating, initially, Political Commissar Yang . . . said, "The Central Military Commission asks, 'Did you or did you not have the conditions to obey the instructions from the Central Military Commission to hold fast [not attack]?[50] Were there conditions present to hold fast or were there not?[51] Was it possible or not possible to not fight?[52] And was it possible or not to wait for the 134th division [Ch. shi] to come?'"[53]
>
> This [investigatory] meeting went on for two hours and I was there for all of it. . . . After the battle was over, for a month my job was to collect the documents we got from the rebels in Norbulinga, Kundeling, and from other places. . . .
>
> Q. When did the Central Military Committee do the investigation?
>
> A. . . . General Hong Xuezhi, the General Director of the Logistics Bureau [Ch. zong hou qing bu zhang], led a work team [from Beijing] which also included Director Yang of the Combat Department [Ch. zuo zhan chu zhang]. When they came to Lhasa, they questioned us as to why we didn't stick to the Central Committee's instructions and instead opened fire early. Did we have the conditions to hold fast to

---

[49] Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu weiyuanhui dangshi yanjiushi 2011, 248–49 (emphasis added).

[50] In Chinese: ni men you mei you zun shou zhong yiang jun wei yao jian shou de zhi shi.

[51] In Chinese: you mei you zhe ge jian shou de tiao jian.

[52] In Chinese: bu da zhang xing bu xing.

[53] In Chinese: deng dai yao san si lai xing bu xing.

the position [of not fighting]? They [also] criticized us for doing that shelling [the firing of two mortar shells at Norbulinga on the seventeenth], which was wrong, and investigated this. At that time, we had already received punishment [for that] and had been criticized. I accompanied them to inspect the site outside of Norbulinga. Even today, the Dalai's propaganda says that their flight was due to the two shells fired at Norbulinga. The Hans attacked Norbulinga so we had to flee. It was said the two bombs landed inside Norbulingka, but they actually landed outside of it. I went to see that.

Q. [Another person at this interview asked]: How many investigating teams were sent to Tibet?

A. A very big work team was sent to Tibet to investigate. . . . In the past, there was the [Great Contraction] policy of "no reforms for six years" and "appropriate contractions," but now the policy was to put down the rebellions and carry out land reforms. This was a very big military operation, so stable logistical support [Ch. hou qing bao zhang] was important. So General Hong Xuezhi [the director of the logistic department] came personally. At the same time, he brought other cadres along to investigate. Director Yang from the Combat Department of the General Staff Department [Ch. zong can zuo zhan chu] also came along. Because of his combat standpoint, he (Tan) was asked, "Did you or did you not have the conditions to hold fast to [your position]?

A. At that time, Wang Kang, the Chief of Staff of the [Tibet] Military Command Area, who was not in Lhasa during the Lhasa battle, came back to Lhasa after the battle was finished together with Zhang Guohua. He presided over the meeting. Director of the Combat Department Zhou Hongming, Vice Director of the Intelligence Office Jiang Wenqi, and some others attended the meeting. I was there when they answered the questions.

Q. What did they ask him?

A. Director Yang from the investigation team asked questions like, "Was it okay or not to fight?"[54] "Why did you fight without waiting for the [reinforcement] unit to come?" Wang Kang and Director Zhou answered by saying "Look, [the rebels] had given orders asking people between the ages of eighteen and sixty to come [to fight], so how was it possible for us not to fight? We think that the decision [to fight] made by Political Commissar Tan Guansan was correct. [There is a Chinese saying] "When the general is out in the battlefield, he may not listen to the orders from the emperor."[55]

Q. Were these three people talking to Yang Chuzhang or were there a bunch of people?

A. They were talking only to Yang. Hong Xuezhi didn't attend.

Q. How long did that take?

A. It took two hours, during which time they were arguing whether it was possible not to have fought. Finally, Yang became quiet. In the beginning, he was questioning

---

[54] In Chinese: bu da xing bu xing.

[55] In Chinese: jiang zai wai jun ming you suo bu shu.

> and criticizing us, but eventually, he could not argue anymore. He did not know the situation well [in Lhasa]. And we gave a very detailed report of the situation.
>
> Q. Did he only talk to the three people?
>
> A. No, he talked to seven to nine people, including me.
>
> Q. What could they been asking for two hours?
>
> A. We debated. Initially, he [Yang] thought we should not have fought and should just have held fast and waited for the reinforcements to arrive. But we felt it was impossible not to start the battle.
>
> Q. The two hours was for each person, or for all of them?
>
> A. For all of them. This matter was not decided until two months later, in the second half of May, when the Central Military Committee finally stated that Tan had made the right decision and that the Lhasa battle was justified. Because of this, when we write histories, Tan Guansan is always highly praised, saying that he had great initiative for he stood up for the people [Ch. dui ren min fu ze] and was willing to take responsibility for starting the war. Even though he might have been making a mistake, he was courageous to take the risk as well as the responsibilities. And he was correct and has been highly praised till today. This was written as his achievement.[56]

So in the end, Beijing decided that since Tan Guansan's insubordination resulted in the quick suppression of the revolt in Lhasa, rather than punish him and focus attention on his disobedience, they made him a hero and then moved on to the second, and far more difficult task, putting down the revolts all over Tibet and implementing democratic reforms and a new governmental administrative system in Tibet. This would take years to complete fully.

---

[56] Wang Gui, interview, Beijing, 2012, H.0120.01.

15

The End of Old Tibet

REFORMS

Once the "Battle for Lhasa" was over, one of the key decisions Beijing had to make was whether the Seventeen-Point Agreement should be maintained in some form. For example, should the TWC leave Ngabö and Sambo, the two more "progressive" kalöns who were still in Lhasa, in place to run a new, more cooperative Kashag and work with them to implement democratic reforms? Alternatively, should the Tibetan Local government be completely dissolved and replaced by the PCTAR with the Panchen Lama installed as its new chairman? And should democratic reforms be started immediately all over Tibet or selectively? Beijing quickly addressed such issues and made major decisions about the postwar political situation. Their decisions were conveyed to the TWC in a series of important communiqués that were sent respectively on 21 March, 22 March, and 28 March.

The first of these communications was sent one day after the PLA opened fire in Lhasa and began the battle. It is a highly partisan and long articulation of the Chinese government's internal explanation to their own officials of what just happened, together with a set of general instructions on how to proceed, especially the new operating guideline: "*fight and [do] reforms simultaneously*" [Ch. bian da bian gai]. It provides a useful window into the guidelines that Chinese officials in Tibet were going to be working with.

INSTRUCTIONS ON THE POLITICAL WORK OF UNWAVERINGLY PUTTING DOWN THE REBELLION IN TIBET, ISSUED BY THE GENERAL POLITICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE PLA

[21 March 1959]

The Tibetan upper-class reactionaries have publically betrayed the motherland and declared independence. On March 10th, they instigated the masses to demonstrate by making up that Han people were going to detain the Dalai. They shouted reactionary slogans such as "Han people get out of here," "PLA get out of Tibet" and "Long live Tibetan Independence." On March 20th, the armed rebels in Lhasa started attacking our Tibet Military Headquarters from the east side, the west side, and the north side. Now the Tibetan upper-class reactionaries have completely exposed their reactionary face to the public and launched a comprehensive armed revolt.

This anti-revolutionary action of theirs had been plotted for a long time. . . . In the past two years, they not only supported the revolts in the Tibetan areas in Sichuan, Gansu, and Qinghai, either publically or secretly, but they also instigated new armed revolts in Chamdo, Shannan [Lhoka], and Tengchen in Tibet, damaging our transportation system, attacking our PLA sentry posts and vehicles, and arresting and killing the local cadres and Tibetan progressives.

We have done everything we can do to try to win over the Tibetan hierarchy. As early as May of 1951, the representatives of the Central People's Government signed the Agreement on Peaceful Liberation of Tibet with the representatives of the Tibetan local government. This Agreement requires that the Tibetan local government should firmly distance itself from the imperialists and actively assist our army to enter Tibetan areas in order to protect the integrity of the territory and sovereignty of the motherland. Also, based on the Central Committee's current policies for ethnic minorities and the actual situation in Tibet, the internal affairs in Tibet should be administrated in an extremely tolerant way. During the eight years following [the Agreement], our troops and cadres in Tibet have unwaveringly carried out this agreement and have done a lot in trying to unite the Tibetan people and in trying to win over the Tibetan hierarchy.

In 1956, taking into consideration Tibet's historical condition and contemporary situation, the Central Committee announced clearly it would postpone democratic reforms once again—that is, there would be no democratic reforms in the six years following 1956. Facing local rebellions and some provocative actions of the Tibetan army, we always kept a restrained attitude—being defensive militarily without launching large-scale strikes. Because of the implementation of these correct strategies and policies, the general public in Tibet has gradually come to know more about our Party and our army, and the long-existing ethnic estrangement between the Chinese and the Tibetans is gradually being mended; some monk officials and lay officials in the Tibet local government are also gradually siding with us. However, the majority of the members of the Tibetan hierarchy still insisted on a reactionary position and regarded the Central Committee's guidelines, policies, and measures as showing "incompetence" [Ch. wu neng] and as being "weak and gullible" [Ch. ruan ruo ke qi]. Finally they blatantly broke the agreement on Tibet's peaceful liberation, heading toward the criminal road of treason.

The treasonous activities of the Tibet reactionary hierarchy are a deliberately planned and organized antirevolutionary action which was instigated, supported, and funded by foreign imperialists and reactionaries such as the USA. The nature of the treason is an intense class conflict. It is committed by the Tibetan reactionaries against the will of Tibetan people in order to maintain their feudalism and serfdom under the cover of the pretext of ethnicity and religion.

In the past, the Central Committee's plan was to initiate peaceful and step-by-step reforms at the right time to solve the Tibetan question. But now, the Tibetan reactionary group has torn up the agreement on Tibet's peaceful liberation and openly betrayed the motherland, *leaving us no choice but to change the original plan and settle the Tibetan question in advance [earlier than planned]. So the Central Committee has decided to put down the revolt in Tibet resolutely.* In the meantime, [we will] adopt the guideline of "*fight and [do] reforms simultaneously*." Based on the principle of initiating reforms once the revolt occurs [we will] carry out the democratic reforms step by step in a thorough way in order to tear down Tibet's feudalism and serfdom and liberate Tibet's vast working masses. . . .

In order to put down the revolt in Tibet rapidly and thoroughly, [we] must combine the following three strategies: military attack, political winning-over, and mobilizing the masses. *We must strictly distinguish the rebels from the general Tibetan people.* Among the reactionaries who took part in the rebellion, [we] *must further distinguish those hard-core reactionaries from the followers,* in order to better win over the masses, and alienate and isolate the enemy.

Most of the Tibetan people lack a correct political awareness [Ch. zhengzhi juewu] because they suffered for a long time under feudalism [Ch. feng jian tong zhi] and religious deception [Ch. zong jiao qi pian], as well as due to the ethnic estrangement between the Chinese and the Tibetans that was formed a long time ago in history. At the beginning of the revolt, there must have been a part of, or even possibly a majority of people taking part in the revolt; some of these were forced to join in the rebellion while others joined it unknowingly. We must pay attention to trying to win them over. For those of them who confronted us with weapons in hand, [we must] wipe them out resolutely. But if they put down their weapons, [we should] treat them well.

Beating, insulting, abusing, and killing those who are captured by us is strictly forbidden. [We should] offer medical care to those who are wounded. [We should] welcome those who turn to us, and treat them nicely. For those who escaped under coercion, especially women, children, and the elderly, we should try hard to persuade them to flee from the reactionaries and return home to work. [We should] protect all the monasteries (including all the cultural relics and historic sites), except those that were occupied by the reactionaries as defense points against us, which will therefore inevitably suffer from damage in the battle. It is not allowed to damage [monasteries] carelessly under the pretext of doing battle.

[We should] also treat the monks differently based on whether a monk was involved in the revolt, as well as his position in the reactionary group. [We] must distinguish the religious issues from the rebellion-related issues, [and we] must respect the people's religious freedom. For the religion-related issues and monastery-related issues, we must be extremely careful lest we hurt the Tibetan people's religious feelings and give opportunity to the reactionaries to take advantage of the situation, and thereby add more difficulties to our actions to put down the revolt.

With regard to the members of the Tibet hierarchy who took part in the rebellion, many of them are hard-core reactionaries, yet some others haven't taken a clear position. Different kinds of conflicts of interest exist between members of the upper-class reactionaries, between monasteries, between lamas who have large social impacts and those who have smaller impacts, between different tribes [Ch. bu luo], and between the rebels who are from other areas and those who are natives. In particular, after we give them a powerful military blow, these kinds of conflicts will become greater, which will inevitably facilitate their group's further collapse. Thus, [we] should pay attention to this and grasp proper opportunities to win over some of them. To achieve this, besides making full use of the network of United Front Work among the Tibetan cadres and upper hierarchy, [we should] also make efforts to win over the captured army officers as well as the captured monk and lay officials, in order to win over more armed rebels via them.

There are many foreign nationals in Tibet. There are Indian and Nepalese consulates in Lhasa. In some areas there are foreign business agencies. [Thus, in Tibet] it is easy for us to encounter issues related to foreign affairs. When putting down the revolt, every soldier must pay attention to the issue of our diplomatic policy. [The troops should] pay attention to protecting the foreign nationals. Consult one's superiors for instructions regarding anything that involves diplomatic issues, otherwise no action is allowed.

The fundamental approach for us to put down Tibet's revolt, destroy Tibetan feudalism and serfdom, and liberate the Tibetan people is to fully mobilize the masses and to rely on the masses. . . . *All the troops must follow the Central Committee's "fight and reform simultaneously" guidelines* and reform plans. (Our guideline is to launch actual democratic reforms under the slogan of putting down the revolt.) Thus, when it comes to propaganda, only mention putting down the revolt, do not mention reforms, and closely cooperate with local officials and make efforts to mobilize the masses under the leadership of the local Party committees. Fighting the enemy and mobilizing the masses should be combined together tightly.

In order to divide the enemy and win over the masses, [we] must educate our PLA officers and soldiers to comply with our regulations on dealing with [our] relationships with the masses no matter when and where. [They must] respect the Tibetan people's religious beliefs and customs, and try to influence and win over the Tibetan people by being models of good behavior themselves [Ch. mofan de xingdong]. [We should] encourage every PLA officer and soldier to learn to speak everyday Tibetan, no matter how few sentences, to better conduct propaganda work among the Tibetan people. Unite and help the Tibetan cadres and progressive Tibetan youths with utmost passion to further unite the vast Tibetans via their help. For those patriotic Tibetan upper-class people, [we] should actively do united front work, trying to get them to be closer

> *to us in order to benefit the work of putting down the revolt and fully liberating the Tibetan people.*
>
> It is a glorious yet extremely difficult task to put down the revolt and fully liberate the Tibetan people. Because the Tibetan people have suffered from feudalism and religious deception for a long time, *and because there has been deep ethnic estrangement between the Chinese and the Tibetans,* and also because this revolt in Tibet is supported by imperialists and foreign reactionaries and they [Tibetan reactionaries] are close to foreign countries geographically, *it might take several years before we end the fight and solve the problem completely.* Other difficulties include the Tibetan plateau's high altitude, highly dispersed population, inconvenient transportation, as well as the language barrier. We should make sufficient preparations for these, and we can absolutely overcome these difficulties.
>
> Because of the deep-rooted class conflicts between Tibet's reactionary group and the vast Tibetan working people, when the former openly betrays the motherland and their disguise of religion is debunked, the masses will realize the truth quickly and the upper-class reactionaries who rebelled will get politically isolated quickly. After our eight years' of work in Tibet, we have exerted positive impacts among the vast masses and some upper-class people. Thus, we believe that as long as we fight bravely, carry out the policies resolutely, follow our regulations on dealing with the relationships with the masses strictly, and do our best to mobilize the masses, the revolt in Tibet will be put down definitely, the Tibetan people will be liberated fully, and the conspiracy of Tibetan reactionaries and imperialists will fail completely![1]

Zhang Jingwu sent additional instructions to the TWC from the Central Committee on 22 March that contained more specifics on how land reforms should be conducted and reveals some nuances that had been decided regarding internal differentiations.

"REGARDING POLICIES OF CARRYING OUT TIBETAN DEMOCRATIC REFORMS WHILE PUTTING DOWN THE REBELLION"

> The Tibetan local government has broken the Seventeen-Point Agreement and has betrayed our country. They have launched an overall rebellion over the whole of Tibet. This situation forces us to start fighting a decisive battle with the Tibetan upper-hierarchy reactionaries *ahead of our original schedule,* and to fight a battle to put down the rebellion in order to solve the problems in Tibet thoroughly. Under such circumstances, the Central Committee's original policy of having no changes for six years cannot be carried out. In order to engage the masses of the Tibetan working class people in the struggle of putting down the rebellion and to prevent any resurgence [of the reactionary forces/revolt], the Central Committee believes that during this battle to crush the rebellion, we have to firmly mobilize the masses to carry out democratic reforms. In doing this, we will thoroughly liberate the Tibetan people, lead Tibet onto the socialist road, and get rid of the roots of any activities for

---

1. Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui, eds. 1995: 93–98 (emphasis added).

independence and of betraying our country. This will be a long and tough struggle (for maybe two or three years or even longer), but it is a glorious task.

To take advantage of our completely positive position in politics, and to isolate our enemies to the utmost, we should openly only use the slogan of putting down the rebellion. Do not mention carrying out democratic reforms. Democratic reforms will be fully carried out under the slogan of crushing the rebellion. *Our policy is to do reforms while putting down the rebellion, and to carry out reforms first in areas where rebellion occurs and postponing reforms in areas where there is no rebellion.* Based on the current situation, reforms can first start in Lhasa, followed by Shannan [Lhoka], Chamdo, and Tengchen [in the northern Chamdo region]. The Panchen's areas can wait. In those few counties ruled by Phagpalha [in Chamdo], reforms can also wait if no rebellion occurs.[2]

Our class line of carrying out reforms in Tibet is to rely on the masses of the working people, unite with any forces that can be united with, and get rid of the feudal serf system step by step. Try to discuss policies relating to putting down rebellion and carrying out reforms with patriotic and progressive individuals among both the upper-hierarchy Tibetans and those who are trying to be close to our party and our army.

As to the feudal serf system in Tibet, farmland owned by the Tibetan local government must be divided up and given to farmers, and [farmer's] debts and corvée [Tib. ula] obligations must all be canceled. The old feudal ownership system of the aristocrats must also be completely abolished. But in handling specific situations, there should be differences according to their political attitudes. To those who participated in the rebellion, everything they own must be confiscated, including farmland, houses, farming animals, crops, and farming tools. These things should be given to farmers. All of their debts and corvée obligations must be cancelled. To those who behaved progressively and still have big political influence, we can use the purchasing method.[3] After they have given up their feudal exploitation, we can make appropriate political arrangements for them plus provide certain economic compensation.

Continue carrying out the policy of protecting religious freedom. Give equal treatment to different religious branches [sects]. . . . Confiscate all the land, houses, farming animals, farming tools, and crops owned by monasteries that participated in the rebellion, and give these to the farmers. Also cancel all their debts and corvée obligations.

To those monasteries that did not participate in the rebellion, negotiate with them and give their land, extra houses, farming animals, and farming tools to farmers. Do not confiscate their crops, but you can ask them to lend some to farmers through negotiation. The farmers can return (repay) the crops after the harvest. Also cancel their debts and corvée obligations. From now on, all monasteries must be patriotic, observe the laws, not act against the policies of the state, not interfere with government administrative affairs, not privately hide arms, and not force people to be monks. *People have the right to be monks, and monks have the freedom to become laymen. Monks can organize their own management committees to manage the property of monasteries in a democratic way. Abolish the governing relations among monasteries.*[4] During battles to crush the rebellion, make sure to protect famous monasteries and historic sites.

---

[2] The Panchen Lama and Phagpalha strongly supported the Chinese.

[3] This refers to the system of compensating the elite/landowners for their confiscated property.

Confiscate the guns and ammunition of the rebels, rebellious regions, and monasteries. For the time being, do not touch the weapons of people who did not participate in the rebellion. This problem can be solved in the future when we organize people's armed forces [militias]. Do not touch the weapons of the progressive upper hierarchy yet.

There are a number of upper-level Tibetans in the serf class. They are either rich people who rent large amounts of land from feudal lords and then re-rent the land to farmers, or they are the agents (managers, stewards) of the estates of feudal lords. They are people with power in rural areas and have direct control over the farmers. The farmers hate them a lot. You should treat these people as part of the feudal serf system. To those among them who are truly politically progressive, or those who have rented only a small amount of land and are not hated very much by the people, differentiate individual situations, and handle them in a lenient way.

Do not carry out reform in pastoral areas. Feudal lords can still keep their animals. Herdsmen can keep their animals too. [But the] animals of rebels should be confiscated and given to herdsmen.

There should be no change in industry and commerce if these are owned by either aristocrats or monasteries. Abolish, however, the feudal privileges in commerce (such as tax exemptions and use of corvée transportation). Foreign trade must all be conducted by the state.

Do not do anything to the land and property of overseas Tibetans. We will study the question and deal with it later on.

While putting down the rebellion and carrying out reforms, go all out to mobilize the masses, to lead the masses in a movement to vent their grievances, and to debate with the rebels face-to-face.

During the democratic reforms, establish farmers' associations or associations of farmers and herdsmen. Carry out the policy that all rights belong to the farmers' association. The power of leadership must be in the hands of poor farmers. We will gradually establish people's democratic governments at all levels. While crushing the rebellion, whenever we enter a rebellious region, immediately make an announcement to dismiss the former government institutions, appoint new officials, set up new government institutions. You can keep and appoint those former officials who behaved progressively.

During the process of putting down the rebellion and carrying out the reforms, to those big or small leaders you capture, sentence to death only those few who are guilty of the most heinous crimes in order to redress the grievances of the people. To everyone

---

[4] A small number of large monasteries functioned as "mother" institutions or monastic seats (Tib. densa) with smaller branch monasteries under them.

> *else, sentence them to reform through labor. Send them to inland areas to cultivate virgin land. Death sentences must be approved by the TWC. Death sentences of major representative figures must be approved by the Central Committee.*
>
> Educate the whole army to stick to the Party's ethnic policy and to observe the various policies of the Party during the process of putting down the rebellion and carrying out the democratic reforms. Make a clear distinction between the rebels and the people. Firmly protect the people. Do not take revenge on or kill any captives or anyone who has laid down his weapons.
>
> Try to establish a reliable Tibetan armed force while putting down the rebellion and carrying out the reforms.
>
> *For the purposes of developing production and gradually raising the living standards of the people, after the reforms, the government will only collect a small amount of money for the expenses of the institutions of civil affairs below the county level. The state will not collect any agriculture taxes for three years.*
>
> For the purposes of putting down the rebellion and carrying out the reforms, try to train and promote a large number of Tibetan cadres from among those Tibetan working class members who actively participated in the struggle. The Central Committee has decided to appoint a small number of main leaders [needed by Tibet] from Sichuan, Qinghai, and Gansu provinces. . . . The specific number of main leaders needed by these areas will be decided later on.[5]

Mao and the Central Committee also made a major decision not to start communes immediately. Phundra, a Tibetan translator from Amdo, recalled a meeting between Mao, Zhou Enlai, the Panchen Lama, Ngabö, and Che Jigme on 7 May 1959, in which this issue was discussed.

> In Tibet, some said we should implement them (communes) in Tibet. At this time Mao and Zhao met Ngabö and the Panchen. I was the translator. Zhao Enlai spoke first, saying, "Do not implement communal production in a hurry. First divide the land and give it to the peasants. Let them plant the land and get a taste of the profits of farming. In the past they had no land." Then Mao said, "Do not start communal production too quickly. If you give land to those without land in the past and let them plant it, they will become very revolutionary in their thinking and production will increase." So while communes existed throughout China, they were not implemented in Tibet until after the Cultural Revolution in 1968 and 1969.[6]

Officially, the "new" Tibet was established on 28 March, when Premier Zhou Enlai issued a State Council decree that replaced the Tibetan local government with the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region (PCTAR) (Ch.

---

[5] DPRC. Central Committee's Instructions: "Regarding Policies of Carrying Out Tibetan Democratic Reforms While Putting Down the Rebellion," 22 March 1959 (emphasis added). These instructions were labeled as a draft version.

[6] Phundra, interview, Beijing, 1993, H.0056.02.

xizang zizhiqu choubei weiyuanhui). It had been created in 1956 but now became the new government for Tibet with the Panchen Lama replacing the Dalai Lama as its acting Chairman. That decree specified,

> We have detected that most of the kalöns in the Tibet local government and the subversives from the Tibetan elite were colluding with imperialists, gathering rebels, launching the rebellion, threatening the people, kidnapping the Dalai Lama, breaking the "17-Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet," and in addition, on the night of March 19th, commanded Tibetan local armies and other rebels to attack the PLA who were then stationed in Lhasa. These kinds of activities, namely betraying and disunifying our motherland, cannot be tolerated according to laws of our country. So in order to defend the national unity, we ordered the PLA Tibet Military District to put down the rebellion. *In addition, we are ordering that the Tibet local government be dissolved today, and that from now on, the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region will replace the Tibet local government and exercise administrative power in Tibet. . . .*[7]

At the above-mentioned 7 May 1959 meeting, Mao also commented about the failure of his moderate gradualist policy. . . . "Surkhang and Phala launched the rebellion. They wrongly estimated the situations and our policies in Tibet. *Our policy, you know, was no reform in six years, and whether there would be reforms after six years depended on the situations at the time. After deciding no reform in six years, we withdrew twenty thousand or thirty thousand soldiers [in 1957]. The purpose of doing this was to unite with them and help them make progress. But they took this opportunity to organize Khambas and launched rebellions in places like Southern Tibet. . . .* Those people were with the British for too long, and they were deeply involved. They only wanted to have an independent Tibet. They plotted for a long time. It was part of their planning to mobilize Khambas to set up bases in southern Tibet. This was also to prepare a way for retreating, so if the rebellion failed, they could escape from there."[8]

In the end, eighteen days after a few monk officials instigated the 10 March demonstration at Norbulinga, traditional Tibet was terminated and new socialist institutions had begun to replace them. In Chinese communist terminology, the traditional or "old society" was becoming the "new society."

On another front, as the situation in Lhasa was worsening, in Lhoka, Chushigandru received a new airdrop of arms from the CIA.

---

[7] Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui, eds. 1995, 136–37 (28 March 1957). Emphasis added.

[8] DPRC. "Chairman Mao's Conversation with Panchen, Ngabö, and Che Jigme on May 7, 1959 in Huairentang." As has been discussed before, the Chinese never understood that it was Phala, not Surkhang, who was actively backing the rebels.

THE UNITED STATES AND CHUSHIGANDRU, 1959

The first CIA airdrop of weapons for Chushigandru occurred in October 1958, at the same time that it was decided to exfiltrate a second group of Tibetans for paramilitary training, this time in the United States. Then, four months later, a second airdrop of weapons was parachuted to Athar and Lotse in Lhoka on the fifteenth of the first Tibetan month (23 February 1959), just two weeks before the Lhasa Uprising.[9] At that time, when Athar and Lotse collected the second drop's weapons and radioed back that the drop was successful, they were told by the CIA to wait at that site, because another plane with more arms was being sent. However, that never materialized.

> We waited there for the [second] drop to come for three more days, but nothing arrived. Then I thought, "If we leave the weapons [from the initial drop] here for [too] many days, there is a danger that the Chinese will notice them." Athar and I, therefore, decided that Athar will wait here for the plane [bringing the additional arms], while I will load up the horses and mules with the weapons [already dropped] and go to a place called Lhotö, where I would wait for Athar. I left as planned, but after just two days, Athar arrived and said that he had received another message saying that the other plane will not be coming.[10]

Presumably, the window of moonlight had run out for that month.

Athar and Lotse were then staying in the south of Lhoka in the area of Lhüntse Dzong, so that is where they unpacked the weapons. Like the first drop the previous October, this shipment contained enough weapons to equip only a company of about one hundred to one hundred fifty men, and included the same kind of older British Lee-Enfield rifles, plus some older Sten and Bren guns and some small mortars and other weapons. There were no modern American weapons such as the M-1 carbine.[11]

While Lotse and Athar were organizing these weapons and the other items in the drop, a rider suddenly arrived from Phala with an urgent message that said,

> In Lhasa, an uprising has taken place and the Dalai Lama is prepared to flee. He is on the way, so please get in touch with the Americans about this. Also, the two of you must come as close [to us] as possible [move north to meet up with them as they

---

[9] Athar, interview, India, 1995, H.0007.06.

[10] Blo Tshe (Lotse) 2001, 50.

[11] McCarthy, one of the CIA officers directly involved with training the Tibetans, has written that "Beginning in late 1958, U.S. M-1 rifles replaced the British .303 rifles; 80 mm mortars were added to the 60 mm mortars, and the 75 mm recoilless rifles were added to the 57 mm recoilless rifles" (1997, 243). However, based on the accounts of Athar and Lotse and a phone conversation with McCarthy, the year 1958 was a mistake, and better weapons such as the M-1 carbine only started to be provided to the Khambas later in 1959 after the Dalai Lama was in India.

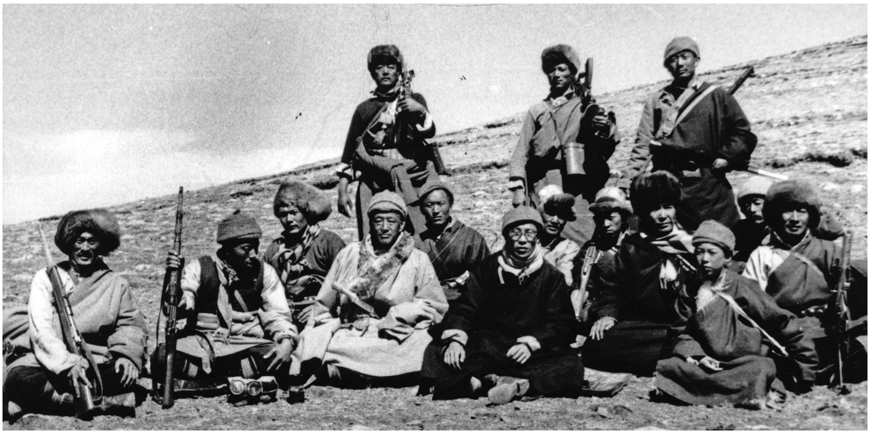


FIGURE 12. Dalai Lama escaping from Tibet (Chushigandru fighters and Phala, the Dalai Lama, and Kundeling), 1959. Courtesy of Photographic Archive, Demton khang Center.

> moved south.]." The order came through Chushigandru's headquarters which was a long distance [away], and when we received it, about four days had already passed [from when it had been sent].[12]

Athar immediately contacted the CIA, who told them to go at once to where the Dalai Lama was and find out everything you can about them [the Dalai Lama and his party] in detail. He said they also told him, "If the Dalai Lama is escaping, you two must serve him as best as you can and let us know everything so that we will see what we can do from our side."[13] It was at this point, therefore, that the Americans first learned of the ongoing escape of the Dalai Lama. They had nothing to do with the planning or timing or the success of the escape.

Athar explained what happened next,

> As soon as I got the message . . . I told my partner (Lotse), "Whatever arms we have, we should not divide and waste them [i.e., by distributing them among the many Chushigandru regiments as before]. I will go ahead [to meet Phala] and you should bring all the weapons with you and come to join me. I will send about one hundred unarmed Khambas [from Chushigandru headquarters] to you, so arm them [with those weapons] and then come. If the Dalai Lama is escaping and the Chinese are in pursuit, we will have a difficult time stopping them if we are not well armed, so follow after me. I'm going ahead to see where the Dalai Lama is." I immediately took seven horsemen and left. The Dalai Lama by then had already [crossed the Yarlungtsangpo River and] had come to Chongye Riudechen. . . .

---

[12] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.02.

[13] Ibid.

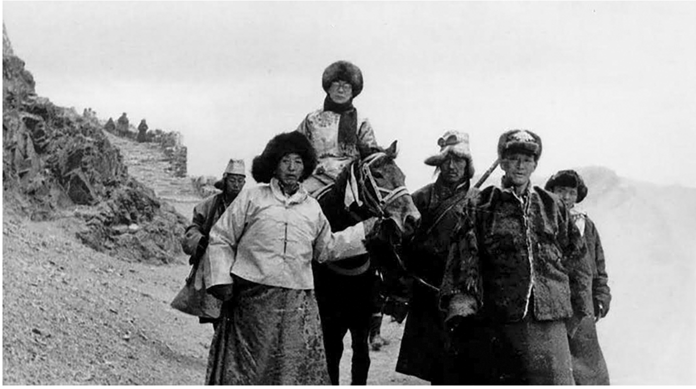


FIGURE 13. Dalai Lama escaping on horseback with Surkhang and Phala, 1959. Courtesy of Photographic Archive, Demton khang Center.

> When we got to the Yartö Dragla Pass [which was south of Riudechen], just before we descended from the pass, we met the Dalai Lama's two tutors and his mother who were coming up to the pass. One of our Litangpa fighters was with them as their servant and . . . he told us that the Dalai Lama is coming. . . .
>
> When I reached the summit of the pass leading to Chongye, the Dalai Lama was coming up, but Drönyerchemmo [Phala] was not with him, so I stayed below the pass [to wait for him]. . . . When Phala and those other leaders arrived, Phala said, "Well done. It is excellent [that you have come]."[14] I told him everything, and then we went along with him and the others. . . .
>
> When we crossed the Yartö Drala Pass and reached E Chundogyang, the one hundred unarmed Khamba fighters arrived, as did my partner Lotse with the newly dropped arms. We all met up there and distributed the weapons to these fighters and made preparations for them to accompany the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama told the two of us to come in [to his tent], and we told him our whole story [about their training and mission and so forth]. . . . We also contacted the Americans, telling them, "We have just met the Dalai Lama and they are at such and such a place according to the map. There is no danger from the Chinese at this moment." So we made a full report. They [Americans] replied, "Congratulations to the Dalai Lama for being out of danger and for arriving safely at E Chundogyang. Please let us know directly whatever help you need." We told the Dalai Lama about it.[15]

The Dalai Lama and Kashag's initial idea, as mentioned, was to remain somewhere in southern Lhoka such as Lhüntse, and then basically see how the Chinese responded and what was feasible, such as new talks. However, after about a week traveling south, the Dalai Lama and his entourage learned from a shortwave radio that the Chinese were implementing democratic reforms and had completely dissolved the Tibetan government. The finality of that brought home the reality of their decision to leave, so they now decided to make a bold response and create *a new government,* as the Dalai Lama explained,

---

[14] Kalön Surkhang and Phala had stayed behind for a while at Riudechen to mediate the previously mentioned dispute between Chushigandru and Namseling, since many of the Khambas incorrectly thought Namseling was working for the Chinese.

[15] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.02.

> We heard that the Chinese had announced that they had dissolved our government, and that was something about which we could take action. . . . Now that that announcement had been made, we thought that there was some danger that Tibetans in isolated districts might think this had been done with my acquiescence. It seemed to us that the best thing to do was not simply to deny it, but to create a new temporary government, and we decided to do that as soon as we came to Lhüntse Dzong, which was still two stages [days] away.[16]

THE LHÜNTSE DZONG INTERLUDE

On 26 March, nine days after leaving Lhasa, the Dalai Lama and his entourage reached Lhüntse and staged a public ceremony/celebration at which Kalön Surkhang read an edict signed by the Dalai Lama that laid out the case for Tibet's independence and proclaimed a new government.[17] This important but long edict broke new ground by conceptually setting out the new government's scope as ruling both political and ethnographic Tibet. It said,

> In the past, for several thousand years, this snow land of Tibet was widely known as an independent country that was ruled by a system that combines the religious and the secular. However, for a period of time, because of the priest- patron relation with the Chinese Manchu Emperor, there has been a dispute in which they pretended that Tibet is merely a part of (Tib. khongdog tsam yin khül) China. However, Ganden Phodrang [the Tibetan government of the Dalai Lamas] has been continuously practicing its authority over religion and politics [in Tibet].
>
> We have military soldiers to defend our country, we manufacture weapons, have used our own coinage made from gold, silver, and copper, as well as paper currency, and these are still being used by all the people. We also put stamps on letters/envelopes and we have direct contact with foreign countries. Except for the difference between a big and a small country, we had similar [attributes] and the complete greatness and qualifications of being an independent country in the world.
>
> However, in 1950, the Communist Party of the Red Chinese sent their military troops by force, and with respect to population, weapons, and all aspects, we couldn't

---

[16] Dalai Lama 1977, 211.

[17] Dalai Lama 1977, 212. On that same day, with an eye toward integrating Chushigandru into the "new government," Gombo Tashi was appointed as commander in chief (Tib. magji) and a dzasa, although at this time he was still north of the Yarlungtsangpo River far from Lhoka.

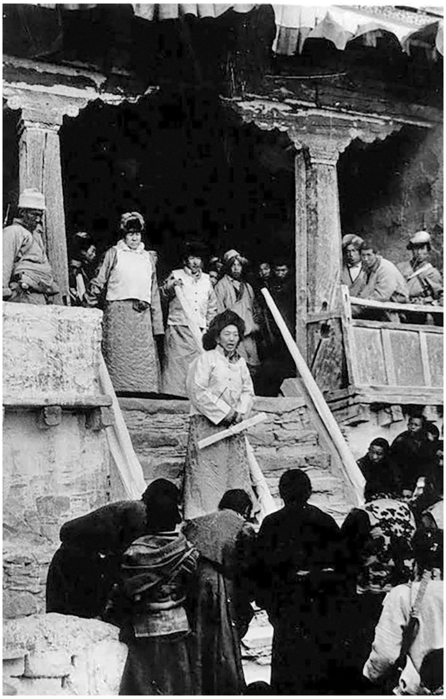


FIGURE 14. Kalön Surkhang about to read the proclamation announcing a new government at Lhüntse Dzong, 1959. Courtesy of Photographic Archive, Demton khang Center.

compete with them, so we were made to sign the Seventeen-Point Agreement between China and Tibet under duress, without this even being discussed with the Tibetan government. It was made exclusively according to the wishes of the Red Chinese.

Since then, the Great Savior Dalai Lama, the Ganden Phodrang Tibetan government, and the monks and lay people of Tibet, all tried their best to get along with and have friendship [with the Chinese], but the Red Chinese government and the Chinese officers and soldiers stationed in Tibet violated the agreement and destroyed many monasteries *in Kham.* Furthermore, they regarded the religion, the lamas, and the monks as their main enemies. They even distorted and blasphemed the Lord Buddha as a reactionary and published these things in newspapers.

Therefore, all the people who have faith in Buddhism in general, and in particular all the monks and lay people of Tibet who consider Buddhism more than their own life, got extremely fed up with them [the Chinese]. Year by year, they [Chinese] did illegal suppression and severely oppressed the people, and it has been proven that they intended to completely destroy Buddhism and the lamas who uphold the Buddhist faith.

Consequently, the Tibetan monks and lay people who are different [from the Chinese] in terms of religion, language, food, and clothing, were disappointed, discouraged, and unbearably angry. Then, recently, on the first day of the second lunar month of the 933 Tibetan Rabjung Year [10 March 1959], the Savior Dalai Lama, the master of both the religion and politics of Tibet, and the Kashag, which is in charge of politics, were invited to the [Chinese] Tibet Military Command Headquarters' compound to watch a show. They [the Chinese] also sent a message saying that the Gusung (Bodyguard) soldiers of the Dalai Lama were not allowed to carry weapons. Although we didn't know what kind of plot they had in mind, because of the difference in strength, we didn't have any choice but to do whatever the Chinese said.

When it was confirmed to go to watch the show, the lamas and the monastic officials of the three great monastic seats, the ordinary monks, the monk and the lay officials [of the government], and roughly tens of thousands of people who live in Lhasa and Shöl were suspicious about the manner of inviting the Savior Dalai Lama to the Chinese regiment, because it was unprecedented during the eight years since the Chinese arrived in Tibet. [So] the people gathered at the main gate of Norbulinga and prostrated and cried out to stop the Dalai Lama from going to the Chinese regimental headquarters.

At the same time, the mental disturbance (Tib. semney) of the people who were thinking in terms of the [joint] religious and the secular system [led them to feel] that the Chinese and the Tibetans were opposites, like hot and cold, and cannot remain together in one container, so they burst out and they held a demonstration and shouted slogans saying, "From today on, all the people have come out from under the Chinese [rule] and have become independent." There was a great surge of an independence struggle. The Savior Dalai Lama tried his best and gave positive instructions to the people's representatives that they should not cause disturbances between the Chinese and the Tibetans and that they should be calm and peaceful, but the mental disturbance of the monks and the lay people could not get cured, so they didn't listen to the instructions, and a large number of armed volunteers stood guard around the Potala, Norbulinga, and the Jokhang. All of a sudden, the relations between the Chinese and Tibetans were broken severely.

Still, the Dalai Lama, with the hope of having friendship between the Chinese and the Tibetans, tried his best to have friendship and harmony between the Chinese and the Tibetans, but the Chinese representatives in Lhasa didn't stretch out a hand of friendship and were trying to suppress [the people] and made wide-scale military preparations. At 4 P.M. on the afternoon of the eighth day of the second lunar month [17 March], the Chinese troops fired two artillery/mortar shells from the north toward Norbulinga, where the Dalai Lama lived. The shells landed at the distance of eighty feet from the palace wall, but they didn't explode. Otherwise, it might have caused severe harm and danger to the Dalai Lama's life. Because this kind of terrible incident happened openly, the monks and lay people of Tibet earnestly appealed that for the time being, the Dalai Lama must be taken to an outside place for the safety of his life.

This kind of sincere appeal was true, so on that night, the Dalai Lama, and an abbreviated entourage consisting of his two tutors, the Kashag, which is in charge of politics, and the Yigtsang, had to leave secretly, and now they have arrived in the Lhoka area. However, since this is a period of an uprising, the monk and lay officials

> in charge of politics and the people can't bear the responsibility for the Dalai Lama to relax and stay in Tibet.
>
> Therefore, for the sake of Buddhism and politics, which are the root of Tibet and Greater Tibet (Tib. phö dang phö chembo), and for the current and long-term future benefit of all sentient beings, [we are] going to take the Dalai Lama to an appropriate foreign country.
>
> While there are Red Chinese troops now in a few towns/cities like Lhasa, otherwise, Ganden Phodrang's [the Tibetan government's] political authority is still governing Central Tibet (Tib. ütsang), Western Tibet (Tib. tö), and Kham. *Therefore, now a new Ganden Phodrang state/nation [Tib. gye khab] that is ruled by the system that combines the religious and the secular will be set up again.*
>
> As the capital Lhasa is in a state of uprising, a [temporary] new capital will be set up in the palace of Yügye Lhünpotse [that is, Lhüntse]. Orders have been sent separately to the ex-Sitsabs Lobsang Tashi and Dekharwa [Lukhangwa], appointing them as Silön [Prime Ministers]. On the auspicious seventeenth day of the second lunar month in the Earth Hog year, 933 Rablo [26 March 1959], in order to hold the inauguration ceremony, the Great Savior Dalai Lama has prayed for Buddhism to flourish and for the happiness of sentient beings in general and in particularly for the monks and the lay people in Tibet, to constantly enjoy the happiness of a golden age. The monks and the lay people and the lords of this area are very happy, and they rejoiced and hoisted auspicious banners and held an elaborate ceremony.
>
> As soon as you people see this edict, which contains the good news about setting up a new independent state called Ganden Phodrang, you must publicize it to all the monks and the lay people in your area and make sure that they have heard it. All the monks and lay people must hoist auspicious banners, and the monks must do the auspicious gelong's confessional assembly and make offerings to the Three Jewels. And all the men and women must dress up, make incense offerings, dance, and sing for getting freedom in your own hands.
>
> *From now on, whatever official and private matters you have to report, you must report to Yügye Lhünpotse, and you must adhere to their orders.* You must consider carefully the temporary and long-run benefits of the Buddhism of Tibet, and from now on you can freely enjoy the new golden age of the happiness of religion and wealth. Keep this content in your mind.
>
> From the Kashag in the palace of Yügye Lhünpotse, on the day and month of Earth Hog Year.[18]

How long the Dalai Lama would remain in Lhüntse depended on when or whether the Chinese were sending troops into Lhoka. This was decided quickly for them when a senior monk official, Tsadora Khenjung, arrived with several other officials from Lhasa and reported about the battle for Lhasa, explaining how the

---

[18] A handwritten copy of this edict was provided to the author by Kalön Surkhang's now deceased former servant, Kelsang Wangchug, on 18 August 2012. The Tibetan-language version is cited in Appendix A (emphasis added).

Chinese had bombarded Norbulinga and the Potala, and killed many people.[19] After hearing the details about the Lhasa battle for the first time, the officials at Lhüntse got frightened, fearing that the PLA could suddenly show up and bombard them, so a decision was made that the safest course of action for the Dalai Lama was to leave at once to seek asylum in India.[20]

Once it was decided to leave Tibet for India, the question immediately became: would Nehru allow the Dalai Lama to enter India? Phala, as discussed in chapter 13, had anticipated it would probably come down to this, so had contacted Nehru through the Indian Consulate in Lhasa on 17 March, the day the Dalai Lama departed. Phala, however, left Lhasa before receiving a reply, so when he reached Lhüntse, he did not know whether the government of India had agreed to grant this, although in actuality, Nehru had instructed his foreign secretary on the nineteenth to inform the consul-general in Lhasa that if the Dalai Lama requested asylum, the GOI would grant it.[21] Phala, of course, had no way of knowing that, so he told Athar to ask the Americans to contact the GOI and request asylum for the Dalai Lama. Athar, who had been sending the CIA daily reports on the Dalai Lama's movements, recalled this,

> It was around 1 A.M. in the morning when I was called to come [to meet Phala]. He said, "It's hopeless." I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "We cannot allow the Dalai Lama to stay like this (here), so it has been decided that he will leave." When I asked, "Where are you going?" He said, "We are going to escape to the border, to India, so please ask the American government for assistance by contacting the Indian government and asking them to allow us to enter India."
>
> At this time, there were also two Tibetans, Changchub Jimpa and Jangra Lekshe, [with the group at Lhüntse] who had been sent previously to Lhoka by Gyalo Thondup as messengers, as well as to take photographs and movies of Chushigandru in action, so I said I'll [also] ask them to go down to the border on the adjacent Indian territory of Mön Tawang to ask for permission. They had Indian passes, so we sent them down to the place called Chu dangmo, where there was an Indian border check post. . . .
>
> Then I said to Phala, "Please put everything [his request to America] down in writing." When he gave that to me . . . I said, "Alright. . . . Are you definitely leaving tomorrow?" [Phala] said, "Yes, we cannot take the risk." I said that I doubt that any danger is going to come immediately tomorrow. If they are firing cannons in Lhasa, why must you who are far away in Lhüntse flee? I said I don't think that there is all that much danger, but Phala said, "Oh no, we can't take such a risk." So I said, alright,

---

[19] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.02.

[20] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.02. The PLA, as discussed below, actually did not start their offensive in Lhoka until 7 April.

[21] Gopal 1984, 88. He cites the foreign secretary's telegram to the Indian consul-general at Lhasa, 19 March 1959.

> that's it. . . . There wasn't anything to be done. We immediately got ready for the Dalai Lama's departure, and I went to set up the wireless equipment on the roof and sent the message.[22]

Athar also said that he told Phala that the Dalai Lama and the government should now inform the Americans that they wanted military assistance to fight the Chinese. He agreed and I put that in the message.[23] The American reply said,

> "Okay, we will try to get that. We will talk with the Indian government, so you proceed as you have decided." So that was the last word.
>
> The CIA also said [to us], the two of you are not leaving, right? You two need to do your best for the guerilla warfare [in Tibet], so you two cannot leave. We told them that we never had any intention of leaving. Gombo Tashi had *still not made it back* [to Lhoka] and we will not abandon Chushigandru's people, so don't worry, we will not flee. We are only going to accompany the Dalai Lama to the border and then return.[24]

The Dalai Lama and his party set out the next day for the border, still not knowing the Indian government's decision, as Athar recalled,

> When we got to [the border], there was still no reply regarding the message [for permission], so . . . we had to wait there. However, that night, a message came from the CIA saying that the Indian government says there is no problem with the Dalai Lama coming to India, so please proceed and the Indian government will make all necessary preparations for you at the border. When I was walking to Phala to tell that to him, the two people we had sent earlier also arrived, and told me that they too had received an affirmative answer from the Indians. Preparations, therefore, were made to leave for India.

Athar and Lotse realized that when all these people entered India they were going to need a lot of cash for expenses, but when he looked around at the pack animals, it seemed that they were carrying nothing with them for that. He knew that in Lhasa the Tibetan government was rich and had money, silver, and gold, but no matter how hard he looked at the loads there, he didn't see that they had brought anything like that with them, so he said to Phala,

> "What do you people have with you? Do you have diamonds, gold, silver, or money? I don't see anything loaded on the pack animals. All the horses were being ridden and the mules had horse feed, tsamba, flour, and some clothes given by the villagers. What do you have? The Tibetan government is going to India along with thirty-seven people in the entourage." Phala said, "We have nothing." So I said, "That is pretty hopeless." He replied that there is some gold at Gangtok which had been left

---

[22] Athar, interview, India, 1993, H.0007.05.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.02 (emphasis added).

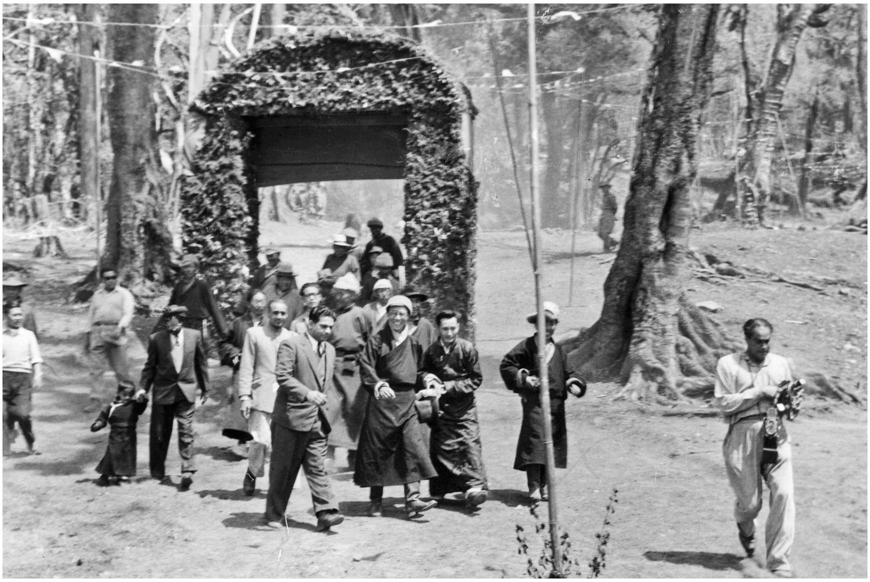


FIGURE 15. Dalai Lama being received by Indian officials at the Indian border, 1959. Courtesy of Photographic Archive, Demton khang Center.

> when the Dalai Lama was at Yadong [in 1950–51], . . . but other than that there was nothing . So when I asked him how he was going to meet their expenses on the road, he said that they had some *trangga garpo* (Tibetan silver coins), but that was it. At that time I happened to have two lakhs of Indian rupees [from the February airdrop], so I said that it may be wise for you to take this along with you, and I told him I will immediately wire America [to see if it is okay]. I told him that this money was meant for us to send people to India for training, but here in Tibet we needed very little of it, so it would be wise to take this money. He said, "Thank you. That would be wonderful." Then I contacted the CIA, and they said to give them whatever they wanted. We will immediately arrange for a plane to send you money if you need it, so go ahead and present it to them. So . . . I gave the money to them in front of everyone.[25]

Finally, after a very difficult trip over snow-covered mountain passes, on 31 March, fourteen days after leaving Norbulinga, the Dalai Lama crossed to Indian soil and has remained in exile in India ever since. Athar and Lotse went back toward Lhasa to try to help Chushigandru and elements of the Tibetan army fight the Chinese.

---

[25] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.02.

THE PLA AFTER THE DALAI LAMA'S FLIGHT

While the Dalai Lama and his entourage were fleeing across Lhoka to the Indian border, the PLA was rushing reinforcements to Lhasa in preparation for launching an offensive to quash the revolt. A Chinese source reported,

> At 23:00 on March 11, 1959, the Central Committee ordered the 54th Corps to organize and establish one small-scale headquarters . . . headed by the commander of the 54th Corps, Ding Sheng, who would then lead the 134th Infantry Division and the 11th Infantry Division to enter Tibet to quell the rebellion. [It was known as Ding Headquarters.] . . .
>
> On March 19th, the staff of Ding Headquarters arrived at Lanzhou from Chongqing by train. On the 20th, the Central Military Committee ordered the 134th Infantry Division to advance along Qingzang Road (the Qinghai-Lhasa highway) toward Lhasa, and ordered them to arrive at Lhasa before March 30th.[26]
>
> On March 27th, the staff of Ding Headquarters arrived at Lhasa from Lanzhou by air. On 28th, the vanguard troop of the 134th Infantry Division arrived at Lhasa. On the 30th, the rest of the troops of this division arrived at Lhasa and Damshung on time. . . . [Then] *On the morning of April 7th, from Chushul, the 402nd Infantry Regiment went across the Yarlungtsangpo River [and the battle for Lhoka began].*[27]

Consequently, it took the PLA almost a month to get everything in place, so their Lhoka offensive did not start until 7 April. After that, for the next three weeks, different PLA battalions and regiments attacked the various Chushigandru units in Lhoka, including those that were besieging Tsetang. Chinese sources state that after twenty-two days, on 29 April, all their military activities to quell the rebellion in the area of Lhoka ended. Lhoka was under Chinese control.[28]

Meanwhile, Athar, Lotse, and the Chushigandru fighters with them returned from the border to Lhoka to fight the Chinese, as did elements of the Tibetan army who had also accompanied the Dalai Lama. They had the idea that they should try to hold onto some Tibetan territory. This was what the CIA had been telling Athar. "Try to hold on to [Tibetan] land," he said, "was always the order."[29] Lhamo Tsering, Gyalo Thondup's aide and a member of the second training group that went to America in 1958, also recalled that this was an important issue for the CIA,

> If all land was lost, then they cannot stop them, right? Even if they helped, it would be useless. So I think that was the case. So they definitely did say to hold on to some land. . . . They were saying to hold territory wherever, and don't come to India.[30]

---

[26] Qi Xin 2009, 216.

[27] Ibid., 218 (emphasis added). Other units such as the 130th division were sent to put down the revolt in the Chamdo area.

[28] Qi Xin 2009, 218.

[29] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.02.

[30] Lhamo Tsering, interview, India, 1995, H.0054.04.

This made sense. America's basic goal at this point was for Chushigandru to continue the insurrection and thereby continue causing problems for China, so the longer they could keep an insurrection in progress in Tibet, the more beneficial it would be for America's China policy.

However, holding on to a territory in Tibet against the PLA was never a realistic or feasible option. While it had appeared to Washington that Chushigandru had been able to *take control and hold the province of Lhoka from the Chinese since mid 1958*, in reality, Chushigandru was operating openly in southern Tibet (and in Pembar) only because, as was discussed earlier, the PLA was under instructions not to go on the offense there. Otherwise, the Khambas could not have stayed casually like that, roaming around wherever they wanted. Recall that when Namseling first arrived at Chushigandru headquarters in Lhoka in October 1958, he was shocked, because it seemed like a picnic site rather than a military camp. Of course, they hadn't needed extensive security and guards, because there were no Chinese around.

Chushigandru's fighters were skilled in hit-and-run tactics and were very brave, but they were poor in frontal attacks against defended sites, as well as in standing and fighting when attacked. For example, in their two main attempts to capture Chinese office compounds at Powo Tramo and Tsetang, they failed. And when they faced a strong PLA force attacking them, as in Gombo Tashi's Nyemo battles, their strategy was not to dig in and hold a position, but was to use their mobility as cavalry to flee and fight another day when they had the advantage. So if the PLA had attacked them in Lhoka, that is most likely what they would have done.

Chushigandru also was weaker at that time than when their headquarters was originally set up, because half of its best fighters were still far away with Gombo Tashi, and the remaining fighters had been divided into small groups of one hundred or two hundred and sent to different locations along the Yarlungtsangpo River to defend the river crossings. And since the CIA had decided not to provide the Khambas with battery-operated tactical radio sets, after the PLA began their Lhoka offensive on 7 April, every Khamba group was basically on its own. The experiences of Athar and Lotse when they returned to help the remaining insurgents in Lhoka fight the Chinese is illustrative of the chaotic situation that existed in the wake of the Dalai Lama's departure. Athar explained,

> When Andru Gombo Tashi [finally] arrived in Lhagyari [just south of the Yarlungtsangpo River, in mid April 1959], the Chinese were advancing at such a speed that we didn't even have time to think. There wasn't anything that we could do. We tried to reestablish a regiment, and people were coming from Lhasa, but [since it was] after the Dalai Lama had left, the people saw the escape route and they knew there was a way out, so then the monks of the three great monasteries, the kudraks, and all sorts of laymen began to escape. And then our [Chushigandru] fighters also saw the escape route and being tricky (Tib. go debo), they would say that they were going to

> fight somewhere tonight, but then the next day we learned that they had fled to India. And so in this way, finally, our territory was lost and everybody was pushed to India.[31]

The experience of a Trapchi Regiment unit that had also returned from the border to fight was similar. The Trapchi troops returned to Lhüntse and from there went back toward Lhasa to continue to fight and to try to prevent Tibetans and Khambas from fleeing to India. However, as one of the junior officers, Jabo, explained, when they reached Chundogyang, that also turned out to be impossible.

> After a few days, . . . just before we arrived at Chundokyang, a person came and told our commander something, so we were told to stop at that place and a meeting was held. The commander said, "Now we can't go back [further to Lhasa] because the Chinese have already arrived in the Yarlung area." . . . At Chödegong, we saw that many Chushigandru fighters and others were coming up [going south], so our commander told me to go there and tell those people that they are not allowed to go out [of Tibet], because we have to [stay and] fight.
>
> I went there and said to them, "Where are you going? He [our commander] said that you are not allowed to leave and you have to go back and fight." They said, "Who is giving this order? I said, "This is the order from our commander." Then they cursed at me and said, "Your father and mother's corpse! [Tib. pharo maro; roughly equivalent to "Screw you!"] What the hell are you talking about?" And they took out their guns right away. At that time, I also had a gun, so if they had tried to shoot me, I wouldn't have stayed still. I told them, "You had better behave yourself, or it won't be good for you." Right at that time, someone shot two or three times, and two of the persons who had taken out their guns were killed right away and their guns were also shattered. I thought what is going on? I didn't shoot them. Later, I came to know that when our soldiers saw them take out their guns, they shot them from the window [of a building they were in]. The remaining people ran away. After that, . . . we couldn't control people leaving [so Jabo and his men also went back to India].[32]

When I asked Lhamo Tsering about this, he said, "It was a psychological affair. . . . Probably, morale was lost. The Dalai Lama had left, and Lhoka was lost, so they probably thought it was useless. People like Athar were there to try to stop them, but they could not manage to prevent the people from leaving.[33]

Ironically, as the Dalai Lama was arriving in India and the resistance of Chushigandru in Lhoka was falling apart, the CIA had finally decided to start sending *very large arms drops of modern American-made weapons* to the insurgents. Lhamo Tsering said that Athar told him that when he had contacted the Americans from

---

[31] Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.02.

[32] Jabo, interview, India, 1993, H.0028.02.

[33] Lhamo Tsering, interview, India, 1995, H.0054.04.

Lhüntse, they had told him that now they were definitely going to help, so stay there in Tibet and do not come to India.[34]

However, it was too late. As had been the case with the trainees dropped in Litang in 1957, Athar recalled that he was unable to hold territory [stay in a place] long enough to ensure a safe drop zone, and in any case, there was no longer a military headquarters and a unified force to use the weapons. Athar explained,

> In East Pakistan, . . . there were arms ready to be dropped to equip a force of two thousand soldiers.. . . . But when they told us that they were going to drop them tonight or the night after, we lost the first drop zone, and then the second, and then the third. So we told them do not drop anything tonight. . . . So we did not allow them to drop it. Otherwise, they had everything ready in East Pakistan. Each of two planes was to carry arms for one thousand soldiers. The two of us . . . did not allow them to make the drop. . . . We couldn't find the men to stop the soldiers from escaping. You know, in war, once they start to escape, one keeps on escaping and it can't be stopped. If you cannot stop them for two days, we cannot give them the arms. In this way, because of this danger, they could not drop the arms.[35]

Consequently, most of the remaining Chushigandru and Tibetan army troops in the Lhoka area ended up quickly following the Dalai Lama to India, including Athar and Lotse, so the CIA had no eyes in Tibet. Gombo Tashi also made it to Lhoka and then to India several weeks later. However, at about the same time as the situation was disintegrating in Lhoka, the new group of Tibetan trainees in Colorado had finished their program, so the agency was eager to send them back to Tibet to hook up with insurgent groups in more remote areas that were said to be still fighting. The idea was that they would provide support to help keep the insurgency alive.[36] The problem was where to send them.

Initially the CIA tried to solve this by bringing back to India several of the Tibetans who had been rejected for CIA training previously due to health problems, so had been detained on Okinawa while the others went to America (they couldn't be immediately sent back to India for security reasons). Working with Gyalo Thundup and Lhamo Tsering, three of these were sent to Tibet overland into the Tsang area to assess the situation and some of the options. However, they almost immediately encountered a PLA patrol, and in the ensuing gun battle, two were killed. The third escaped, but he did not make it back to Darjeeling until several months later.[37]

Despite the absence of reliable intel, the CIA still wanted to send their Tibetan trainees back to Tibet, so they sent small groups of these graduates to a number of areas from fall 1959 to early May 1960, areas chosen based on reports from

---

34. Ibid.
35. Athar, interview, India, 1992, H.0007.02.
36. Conboy and Morrison 2002, 115.
37. Ibid.

Chushigandru officials who had fled to India. These drops, however, all ended up complete failures, and most of those who were parachuted in were killed. The first group was a team of nine graduates who were sent to the Lake Namtso area in northern Tibet, where it was said there was a large group of insurgents under a nomad leader named Nagtsang Powo still operating. The CIA first flew three U-2 reconnaissance flights over the area and then parachuted the agents to the west of Lake Namtso on 19 September (1959). However, when the agents landed, they got nervous and went immediately to their intended target village *without taking their heavy radio*, so the CIA in Washington never heard from them and assumed they had been killed or had perhaps parachuted by mistake into the lake and drowned. Actually, the Tibetan CIA agents reached their designated destination but learned that the insurgents they had come to assist had left the area a long time ago, and more important, the local Tibetan villagers seemed hostile. Fearing they would be reported to the Chinese, they left on foot, heading far to the west through nomad areas on the Changtang Plateau where they expected to encounter fewer PLA patrols. Months later, they made it back to India via Mustang in Nepal.[38]

The CIA, however, was not deterred by these two failures, and proceeded to drop sixteen agents into Pembar, the area where Gombo Tashi had ended up in 1958. Of these, only five made it back to India. This program of infiltrating Tibetan agents back into Tibet by air ended with the downing of the U-2 spy plane in the Soviet Union on 5 May 1960, as the Eisenhower administration then ended all overflights in communist countries.[39]

Lhamo Tsering, who had been working with the CIA on this program, offered some important insights on these failures by explaining the huge disconnect between the CIA's ideas about how the insurgency should be done and that of the local Tibetans.

> Q. Why weren't they [the various 1959–60 drops of US-trained Tibetan agents] more successful?
>
> A. We also were very disappointed by this. Our goal was for the people in Tibet not to fight in a large-scale engagements. The reason [these failed] was that our people had no experience. . . . Wherever we tried to train [them], they asked, "What are you saying about sending only a few instead of 100?" They did not like that because they had no experience. And since their level of education was low, it was difficult for them to understand. They said, "If we are only a few, then we will get killed. You guys are sending us [off] to get killed." They would not listen to us. They said that we were following Chinese policy.

---

[38] Conboy and Morrison 2002, 115–19; Tsong kha lha mo tshe ring (Lhamo Tsering) 1998, 116–17.

[39] Conboy and Morrison 2002, 133. For a more detailed account of all of the failed CIA insertions in 1959–60, see Conboy and Morrison 2002, 115–44; Tsong kha lha mo tshe rin (Lhamo Tsering), 1998, 104–23.

> So really, while we had those Tibetans whom we trained [in America], and there also were new [American] arms and the land was there [still had no PLA presence and no reforms], . . . the locals would not listen. The plan was to reduce the numbers [in the attack units], but no one liked that. Then we also said that we should not all stay bunched [together in one location] but should stay separately. To that, they said that if they did that then they would be nicely fixed-up [means finished, destroyed; Tib. tag tag bzo gi red].[40]

With airdrops now off the table, in the fall of 1960 the CIA and Chushigandru set up a new military headquarters in Mustang in northern Nepal, with the idea of continuing the insurgency from remote western Tibet.

Gyalo Thondup and Lhamo Tsering, however, also felt it was important for the insurgency to try to hold on to some land in Tibet itself, so they set out to create a new home base/headquarters for Chushigandru in Pemakö, a remote area southwest of Powo where the Chinese/PLA still had no presence. Lhamo Tsering explained their reasoning,

> We were thinking that no matter what, Mustang was Nepalese territory. It would not be dependable. If we could go to Tibet, then that was it (was best). If not, we were in Nepalese territory and that was breaking the law. So what we were hearing was that Pemakö was a clean area [unoccupied by the PLA or Chinese officials], so we [Gyalo Thondup and he] sent people [there]. . . . At first, we started with a wireless communications team comprised of four persons. They were not only Khambas, but Central Tibetans from Ütsang and Amdowas too. These wireless people were from our (CIA) group, and we started an organization there. . . . There were a lot of people who had fled there from Tibet such as guerrilla fighters, and they were reorganized. . . . We were thinking that if we could get well established [there], then we would ask [the CIA] for arms, saying we were doing such and such, and we had so many people. Without plans, they [the CIA] would not help. We had to show them something to make them believe [us]. This was a forested area and we made drop zones by cutting down trees. However, while things were going on well, suddenly the 1962 [Sino-Indian] war started at Bomdila, and our supply lines were cut, because the Indians destroyed all the bridges. So we had to withdraw and then the Chinese sent soldiers [and took over the area].[41]

The PLA, meanwhile, divided Tibet into battle zones and systematically cleared one after another of these. And as Mao and the Central Committee had instructed, the fighting was combined with the forced implementation of democratic reforms, so the new socialist system almost immediately replaced the traditional society as each area was brought under control. The manorial estate system was ended, and the lords' lands and properties were confiscated and divided among the poorest

---

40. Lhamo Tsering, interview, India, 1995, H.0054.05.
41. Lhamo Tsering, interview, India, 1992, H.0054.01.

peasants, much as the previously cited Chinese documents had instructed. Moreover, Tibet's unique large-scale monasticism quickly ended, as almost all monasteries ceased to function as religious institutions. What these rapid changes really meant for Tibet's unique religious civilization is revealed vividly in an oral history interview given by a poor monk from Shalu Monastery who was eighteen years old in 1959.[42] His account illustrates the dramatic and rapid demise of Tibet's famous monastic system and the traditional way of life. Those who were able to follow the Dalai Lama into exile had many difficulties to overcome in exile, but the majority of Tibetans who remained behind had their world turned upside down overnight. Some benefited, but many suffered. Thus, although the battle for Lhasa was over in just two days, its ramifications were felt immediately and continued for decades and decades.

> Shalu Monastery, 1959
>
> After the work team of officials [Tib. leydön ruga] came to Shalu Monastery [in 1959 after the Dalai Lama fled to organize the implementation of reforms], one day they held a meeting of all the monks in the monastery. The team leader called the names of the higher rank monks, including Noryon lama, the abbot; Surshi lama, the Tsogchen Umdze or head prayer leader of the prayer assembly; and so on, and asked them to attend a seven- to ten-day session of political education. These higher rank monks were asked to stay in a big house [called the Shalu Kushang]. Each one had to bring his own bedding and mattress. . . . Their food had to be provided from their own apartments [Tib. shag]. Even though they were told to attend an education session, in fact they were being arrested. Each of them was kept in a single room. . . .
>
> The ordinary monks like me went to education sessions every day instead of the daily collective prayer assemblies that we previously attended. During the daytime, we were given butter tea, and at night we would go back to our apartments. Normally the topic of discussion was introduced at the morning session, and after a lunch break, we would discuss and study those topics. These topics were mainly things like the "three antis and two concessions" [Tib. ngogösum dang chayang nyi] and what the terms *trenyog* [the poorest type of serf] and *ngadag* [land-owning lord] meant.[43] And we studied about the [status] of the poor monks in the monastery, and the exploitation and oppression carried out by the three kinds of lords [the traditional Tibetan government, the nobility, and the monasteries]. Though I attended the education sessions, I hoped that they would let me go back to my (village) home because my food (Tib. tsamba) was running out. I was very young at that time and everything was quite new to me, so I did not know what to say at the education sessions.

---

[42] Shalu was a well-known, medium-size Gelugpa monastery in Tsang.

[43] The "three antis and two concessions" campaign (Ch. sanfan shuangjian) started in 1959 in Tibet and consisted of: anti-rebellion (Ch. fandui panluan), anti-corvée labor (Ch. fandui wula chaiyi zhidu), and anti-slavery (Ch. fandui nuyi), as well as concessions on rent for land (Ch. jianzu) and concessions on interest on loans (Ch. jianxi).

Up to the time I left Shalu Monastery, there was only one struggle session that went on for one day. Before it, the work team held several days of training classes to teach us how to carry out such struggle sessions. It was very difficult to learn how to conduct such struggles against those [former monastic] lords.

We monks were divided into several small groups. In these groups, [the officials] said that we will struggle against this and that person, and we held practice sessions. During practice, the group members sat in a circle with several large bags of tsamba set up in a line in the middle. Each tsamba bag was said to represent one particular high-ranking lama. Every monk had to stand up and point at those tsamba bags to rehearse and practice accusation dialogs against these higher ranked monks. In the dialogs, one would say that, "In the past, for a thousand years, you lords were standing on the shoulders of common people and poor monks to exploit and oppress us. Now, under the leadership of the communist party, you are in our hands and should be brought down."

After training in small groups, we had to practice in larger meetings with the rest of the monks. During this time, those monks who were brave and good at speaking were selected from the small groups. They would rehearse and practice accusation dialogs. I was not selected to practice that. At the end of the practice sessions, the work team told us the date of the actual struggle session. At the same time, they told us who would speak first and who would be the second and so forth.

On the day of the actual struggle session, all monks had to attend along with the masses from a nearby village. The moment the higher monks/lamas were brought to the front of the meeting by the PLA soldiers, one person in the audience started to shout slogans such as "so-and-so should be destroyed." The rest of the audience raised their fists and responded by saying "destroy, destroy." The atmosphere became so tense that I was really scared. There were several lamas there like Resur Rimpoche and Butön Rimpoche who were in their sixties and seventies.

Since those higher ranking monks had never heard about or experienced struggle sessions, some of them were a little scared when the solders brought them into the meeting, but others had no idea what would happen to them. They were lined up in the front of the stage and told to stand with their heads [and torsos] bent over at the waist. At the beginning, some of them did not know what a struggle session was, so they kept on standing up straight and looking around. They were confused and did not know what to do. Some of them were not frightened and looked right at the audience's faces.

Some activist monks and villagers came up on the stage and yelled at them to look down and pushed their heads down. The activists told them, "Why are you looking around at the laboring people? From now on, the time of looking up is gone for you." The way that the masses from the villages acted led me to think that they had received similar training as us.

It was a fearsome experience, and I was not able to look up at the faces of those lamas. Those lamas were the lords of both the monks and the lay people, and they were my lords too. They became the lords of this area not through being appointed by others, but by their own capabilities.

When the rehearsal was going on for fifteen to twenty days, everybody was able to accuse [the tsamba bags of] something or say something. But on the actual meeting day, even though it was said that it was voluntary for people to stand up and accuse the lamas, initially, for some time, nobody had the courage to stand up and accuse them to their face. After waiting a while, the leader of the work team said: "Today, there are hundreds of poor monks and poor masses who want to criticize and denounce the lords, but since we do not have enough time, we will let only a few people criticize and denounce them." And then he called the name of the first person to accuse them. It took a while for that first person, who was a monk, to stand up from the audience. I thought he must be scared to be the first person to accuse them. The audience had to wait silently for a while.

When the monk stood up, he looked a little nervous at the beginning, but later he calmed down a little and started to yell at those lamas, ordering them to look down. He accused them one by one according to what he learned at the training session. Some of the lamas still looked up and tried to see who that monk was. I guess they still did not realize how serious the situation was. The person who had been the local aristocratic lord was beaten by the monk much worse than the others. I think that was because in the past he had the power to bully people and people used this opportunity to get revenge. After accusing each one of them, the monk concluded his speech by saying, "Now I would like to stop my speech, because there are many others who also want to accuse them."

After the monk, one young [village] girl was called by the work team. She stood up. I didn't know where she was from. That girl was very active and extremely harsh during the session. She was very good at speaking and accused each one of them of a lot of things. Sometimes when she got angry, she put her knee on the back of the bent-over lamas to force them to bend further. Sometimes while she was speaking, she grabbed and pulled the lamas' clothing with both her hands. Some of the lamas' clothing was torn to pieces through this. By this time, those lamas realized what a struggle session was, and all of them were very scared.

After the women finished, there was a long break when people did not go up to the stage. As some time went by, the leader of the work team must have felt that no one else would stand up to accuse them, so he announced, "Today, the struggle session will be stopped here. From now on we must struggle with these lords, month by month and year by year, until they are completely destroyed." And then, the People's Liberation Army soldiers took all the lamas back to the same place. Noryon lama must have been very scared by this struggle session. I saw that his monk-clothing had been torn to shreds at the meeting.

On the morning of the second day, I heard some people yelling outside that someone had jumped from a building. I went outside to see who that person was, and I saw that it was Noryon lama. He was lying on the ground, which was paved with big flat stones. He had not died yet and he was still breathing weakly when I got there. After a moment, he stopped breathing and died. Noryon lama had jumped from the fourth floor of the building. That day all the lamas were moved to

> the first floor of the building. They did not receive any more struggle sessions and were all transported to a prison in Shigatse.
>
> Shortly after that, since I was a young man, they let me go back to my hometown village. At the time, the work team announced that all monks had the freedom to choose whether to continue to stay in the monastery or to leave it. However, if a person continued to be a monk and stay in the monastery, no one would support his livelihood and he wouldn't get [grain] salary as before. In addition, since most monks had run out of their food by the end of the education session, they had no food to stay in the monastery. Most younger monks were allowed to leave earlier and the older ones were allowed to leave later.[44]

Shalu, therefore, almost immediately ceased to function as a practicing monastery. Similarly, all over Tibet, scenes like that were playing out as the PLA took control of the estates, monasteries, and villages in the different areas it pacified. For example, when this monk went home to his village, the same education sessions were underway there, together with what he said were "fierce struggle sessions" against their former lord, whose property had been confiscated and redistributed among the poor.

---

[44] This interview is part of the online Tibet Oral History and Archive Project collection (TOHAP) edited by Professor Goldstein at the Asian Division of the Library of Congress, OR.0004.01. It was recorded on 2 August 2000 in a village in Shigatse Prefecture between Gyantse and Shigatse.

16

Some Final Thoughts and What-ifs

To fully understand the complex history of Sino-Tibet relations in the 1950s, we need to examine not only the roads taken by the actors, but also consider those not taken. In the case of the Lhasa Uprising of 1959 and the subsequent imposition of forced democratic reforms, the roads not taken are as important to consider as the ones taken. The Dalai Lama and Mao had a range of alternatives, and just as twentieth-century Tibetan history would have been vastly different if, in the 1920s, the 13th Dalai Lama had allowed Tsarong to modernize the army and open Tibet up to the modern world, so during the 1957–59 period, any one of a number of turning points on both sides could have produced a different outcome.

As discussed in previous chapters, the 1957–59 period started positively. Mao and the Central Committee's instructions of 4 September 1956 and their "Great Contraction" initiative in March 1957, coupled with the Dalai Lama's return to Lhasa on 1 April 1957, appeared to set the stage for a new beginning of cordial and cooperative Sino-Tibetan relations. Mao had reversed Fan Ming's plans to start reforms in 1957 and had taken democratic reforms off the table for the next six or eleven years, or even longer should the Dalai Lama and his elite still not be ready to accept peaceful democratic reforms at that time. Winning over the Dalai Lama and his elite was still deemed more important for China's long-term national interests and strategic goals than quickly ending Tibet's exploitive feudal-like manorial estate system. Mao and the Central Committee clearly did not want to push reforms prematurely and create a repeat of the Sichuan fiasco in Tibet, and they saw that time was on their side to optimally incorporate Tibet, so long as the Dalai Lama was supportive and cooperating. The decision of the Dalai Lama to return from India, therefore, was a major victory for Mao's Gradualist policy in Tibet, just as the taking of reforms off the table for the foreseeable future was a victory for the Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lama, therefore, returned to Lhasa intending to follow the advice of Prime Minister Nehru to pursue cooperative relations with China under the terms of the Seventeen-Point Agreement, so as to maximize his internal autonomy going forward. And while the level of autonomy stipulated in the agreement was not independence, nor was it even the high-level autonomy that Tibet possessed while a loose protectorate of the Qing Empire, still it was light-years better than what existed in Sichuan or other minority areas like Xinjiang or Inner Mongolia. Tibet potentially could continue to be part of the People's Republic with the Dalai Lama to a large degree administering Tibet internally with his own officials, laws, and customs for the foreseeable future.

However, for the Dalai Lama and most elite Tibetans, this arrangement was lacking. On the one hand, they believed that at some point, even if it was thirty years hence, Tibet would have to reform its socioeconomic system and adopt socialist institutions. And on the other hand, the Dalai Lama and most of the elite still harbored hopes of being able to restore a Tibet without thousands of PLA troops and cadres occupying their country. So while the terms of the Seventeen-Point Agreement had been acceptable given that Tibet had lost the Chamdo War and failed to secure international support for their cause, elite Tibetans had not given up the hope that they could do better and somehow, or someday, restore full independence, or at least a return to the high-level autonomy of the Qing Dynasty with few or no Chinese troops in Tibet.

The Dalai Lama's return to Lhasa, therefore, was somewhat misleading, as he had not returned fully committed to being part of China as Prime Minister Nehru had so strongly advised and Mao had hoped. Overtly, he was planning to follow Nehru's advice to cooperate with the Chinese and work to secure his general internal autonomy, but ideologically and emotionally, he also was supporting the aspirations of the anti-Chinese forces in India and Tibet who were working to secure outside assistance (American, Taiwanese, or Indian) to force the Chinese out of Tibet. The Dalai Lama, in essence, wanted to keep two paths or two doors open. Overtly, he would actively cooperate with Mao as part of China, while covertly he would let the anti-Chinese elements in Kalimpong and Lhasa continue to operate to see what they could do. For the Dalai Lama, so long as he thought there was a glimmer of a chance that they might succeed, he did not commit to working fully with the Chinese. So while he considered it too risky to give the anti-Chinese forces active support for their resistance activities, neither would he take steps *to suppress them as the Chinese side expected him to do as his part of the terms of the Seventeen-Point Agreement.* For example, although his own Lord Chamberlain Phala was the center of a secret resistance clique in Lhasa and was covertly assisting the Khamba resistance leaders and the Jenkhentsisum anti-Chinese émigré group in Kalimpong, the Dalai Lama had no thoughts of replacing him or severing those ties. He wanted to keep all the benefits of overtly cooperating with Mao and the Central Committee now, while also not taking decisive steps to restrain or hinder those who were struggling to restore an independent or fully autonomous Tibet, in case they were able to succeed, perhaps with American help at some future time.

This strategy was appealing, and it is easy to see why it was attractive to keep a foot on both paths, since that gave the Dalai Lama the most options. That approach, however, became unsustainable once thousands of armed and angry Khambas fleeing from the uprising in Sichuan began streaming into Lhasa, starting in mid 1956. They came to Tibet not really to start a new life but with the thought of securing arms from the Dalai Lama's government or foreign actors to try to reorganize to fight the Chinese and regain control of their homeland, so they quickly formed a militant resistance organization (Chushigandru) in April and May 1957, and then moved to southern Tibet (Lhoka) in June 1958 to establish a headquarters to fight militarily.

Chushigandru in Lhoka was now not just a few thousand Khambas who had lost their revolt in Sichuan and come to Tibet but a formal rebel organization whose revolt was starting to receive support from the United States. However, it should be noted that, as was discussed in chapter 2, the CIA officers in Langley knew that the Tibetan insurgents had no chance of defeating the Chinese. Recall that John Rowland in an interview said frankly, "There was no way to really help a guerrilla force to fight without a tremendous commitment from the outside. Without this you can't help a lot. In Tibet's case, there was no access country before 1962 [the year of the Sino-Indian War]. The Afghanis had the Saudis, Pakistan, China and U.S. help. Air transport was hard due to the altitude of the Himalayas, and the Indians were not cooperative. . . . If we wanted to go all out, we would have had to go to war with China, and we were not about to get into a war over Tibet. . . . We were trying to keep the Chinese on edge. . . . I can't remember hearing or reading anything about 'freeing' Tibet from China by means of paramilitary action—we would give enough so that they could harass—it was out of the question to really support the Tibetans to free Tibet."[1] Of course, this was not conveyed to the Tibetans they were dealing with in India or Tibet, nor to those they were training in Saipan and the United States.

In Tibet, this volatile situation further escalated from the second half of 1958, when serious battles and ambushes occurred. As was seen, Gombo Tashi and the PLA fought a series of battles in the fall of 1958, when the PLA ambushed his large force while it was enroute to Shang Ganden Chöngor Monastery and then pursued him from Nyemo across northern Tibet to Pembar in the Shotalhosum area in northwest Chamdo Prefecture. This was a major defeat for Gombo Tashi, but at the same time, it was also a defeat for the PLA, who had not been able to destroy Gombo Tashi's force. So while Gombo Tashi had been prevented from returning to Chushigandru's new headquarters in Lhoka, where he would have resumed command of all the insurgent forces, he and the three or four hundred remaining troops were able to continue to exist as a fighting force in Pembar. Moreover, Chushigandru fighters in other areas in southern Tibet had been able to start attacking Chinese convoys and road service stations on the two national highways to inland China, so it quickly became clear that the Chinese government could not stand by and let the Khambas' nascent rebellion gain momentum, size, and scope. By late fall 1958, the leaders in Beijing were coming to the conclusion that Chushigandru had to be dealt with, either by persuading them to cease their insurgency and return to Sichuan (or India, or to remain in Tibet peacefully), or by confronting them militarily. However, Mao and the Politburo wanted the Tibetan government to deal with the Khamba rebels and complained repeatedly to the Dalai Lama and the Kashag about the continuing attacks by Chushigandru, telling them *they* had to do something to quell the rebellion in Lhoka before the situation spun out of control. The Dalai Lama/Kashag agreed that the Khambas were a serious problem but disagreed fundamentally with the TWC about who was responsible for addressing the Khamba problem.

---

[1] John Rowland, interview, USA, 1993.

The Chinese side insisted that since this was occurring in Tibet and the Dalai Lama's government was in charge of administering Tibetans internally, it was their responsibility to handle this disturbance just as they would handle any other internal disturbances. Mao and the Central Committee were adamant that the Seventeen-Point Agreement stipulated that the PLA should only be used to keep the national highways open and for border defenses, so they would not authorize the PLA to go on the offensive against the Khambas, except under special conditions. Instead, they wanted the Khamba threat to be dealt with as a Tibetan versus Tibetan affair, not as a Chinese versus Tibetan fight, as had happened in Sichuan.

The Dalai Lama and the Kashag, however, responded that these Khambas had come from Chinese territory to Tibet because of the Chinese government's incorrect policy there. The Chinese, they argued, precipitated the revolt by starting to implement *forced* reforms in Sichuan. So although these Khambas were now in Tibet, they really belonged to Sichuan, and thus the Chinese government was responsible for cleaning up the mess they created. They also suggested that the best way to do this was for Beijing to cease doing reforms in Sichuan, reverse all the reforms that had already been done, and allow the Khambas in Sichuan to have a similar kind of autonomy to that the Dalai Lama exercised in Tibet. Were this to be done, they argued, the Khambas in Tibet would quickly return to Sichuan, and the problem would be solved.

Mao and the Central Committee, however, had already contemplated that alternative and concluded that it would be too difficult and politically painful to reverse the reforms in areas where they had been completed. They could not, they felt, take back confiscated land and houses that had already been given to very poor families and return them to the original landlords.[2] In retrospect, it would have been far more efficacious if they had worked out some way to finesse that in order to stop the revolt in Sichuan and also end the nascent Khamba revolt in Tibet, but they did not, and consequently the Chinese side continued to pressure the Kashag and the Dalai Lama, urging them to use the Tibetan army to quell the Khambas' revolt, even suggesting that if they had trouble, the PLA could help them. This, as discussed previously, was not accepted by the Dalai Lama or the Kashag or the Tibetan National Assembly. For the Dalai Lama, cooperating with the Chinese only went so far. It did not include closing the door to the second "nationalistic" path. He and most of his officials approved of the Khambas' goals and admired their willingness to fight and die to defend Tibetan Buddhism, even if they were not really convinced that they could ever succeed. So they refused to try to quell the revolt using their own military forces, making excuses to the Chinese about why they could not do that. The Dalai Lama talked about this frankly in an interview (first cited in chapter 8):

> So at this time, the Chinese said we should send Tibetan army troops and destroy the Khambas. This was clear. We said that if we send Tibetan troops to fight the Khambas, we do not know whether they will turn their guns on the Khambas or [against] this side, so we cannot take on that task. So this was made clear and rejected. . . . There were two reasons for this. One was that . . . this was very dangerous. And the other was that if we killed our own people it would be terrible. [But] the real inner reason is that it was unthinkable to send Tibetan troops and kill those who had said that they were loyal to Tibet and were fighting for the cause of religion. But to the Chinese we can't say that, right? What we told them was that this is very dangerous. Many soldiers have already gone [over] to the Khambas, so even though the Tibetan government could issue an edict, whether they would fire toward them or against us was not known.[3]

The Dalai Lama further commented,

> You felt one thing in your heart and you had to say something else with your mouth. So if the Khambas opposed the Chinese, we acted as if we didn't see it. The Tibetan government also didn't say to [them to] do it, but internally we thought it was good if they did it.[4]

---

[2] The overall Sichuan Uprising is discussed in detail in Goldstein 2014; this issue is discussed on pages 266–77.

[3] Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1995, H.0019.07.

[4] Ibid.

Since the Dalai Lama and almost all of the elite wanted Tibet's independence or something similar to be restored, that position was understandable, but the reality of the situation was that the Chinese were threatening to bring down the Tibetan government and forcibly implement reforms in Tibet if the Khambas' revolt was not quashed by the Dalai Lama's government, so the stakes were extremely high. If the Dalai Lama / Kashag did nothing decisive to deal with Chushigandru, at some point in the near future, Tibet seemed destined to become the next Sichuan. So not acting against the Khambas was extremely risky, since it was most likely going to produce disastrous results for the Dalai Lama, his government, and Tibet's brilliant Buddhist civilization.

The Dalai Lama and the Kashag, therefore, knew they needed to show the Chinese they were trying to defuse the situation in Lhoka, but they had limited themselves to doing only token actions like sending delegations to try to persuade the Khambas to return to Sichuan and to distributing edicts. They knew that these actions were not going to be successful, but doing them let the Kashag maintain the pretense they were trying to deal with the Khambas' revolt. It is not surprising, therefore, that as more Khamba ambushes occurred toward the end of 1958 and the start of 1959, the Chinese got more and more furious at the Tibetan government and became convinced that the Kashag was actually covertly supporting and assisting Chushigandru. This led to frequent meetings between the Kashag and the TWC, with the Chinese side accusing the Kashag of complicity and threatening again and again that if the Tibetan government would not deal decisively with the Khambas, the PLA would, and then would forcibly implement democratic reforms.

However, on the Chinese side, despite such threats, Mao and the Central Committee actually were not ready to send the PLA on the offense, and instead instructed the Chinese in Lhasa to embark on a crash program to build up their defensive fortifications. Should the Tibetan side suddenly launch an all-out attack against them, Beijing wanted them to be able to hold out for months until reinforcements from inland China arrived. However, the Chinese side's enhancement of their fortifications had a very negative impact among Tibetans in Lhasa, who, having no plans of their own to attack the Chinese there, concluded that the Chinese in Lhasa were actually preparing to attack them, and this represented a serious danger to the Dalai Lama. So as 1959 began, there was a heightened climate of distrust and fear on both sides and Sino-Tibetan relations were rapidly spiraling downward, despite Mao having taken reforms off the table.

By mid to late January 1959, these events had led Mao to conclude that it was time to shift from his preferred gradualist policy to his fallback military policy. Mao and the Central Committee had been willing to keep increasing the pressure and threats on the Kashag and Dalai Lama with the hope that this would spur them into action. But now they concluded that the Khambas' revolt had grown in breadth and intensity so should be considered as a large-scale revolt, which, as was discussed, was Mao's criterion for shifting from the gradualist policy to the military one. This meant that not only would the PLA be destroying Chushigandru's revolt, but it would end the internal autonomy of the Dalai Lama and forcibly implement democratic reforms. However, Mao still did not see using the PLA offensively as an option that was imminent, and internally said an offensive might not be launched for several years, during which time plans for a military offensive would be prepared.

In February, the 1959 New Year's season started, and at one of the annual events, a Chinese official invited the Dalai Lama to view a performance of a new PLA Song and Dance troupe at the Chinese Military Headquarters compound. The Dalai Lama accepted, and eventually the date for his visit was set for 10 March. However, on the ninth, when it was learned that the Chinese would not allow a contingent of the Dalai Lama's armed bodyguard troops to accompany him into the Chinese Military Headquarters compound, Phala tried to persuade the Dalai Lama that this was unacceptable and that he would be in danger if he went under those conditions. However, despite his urging the Dalai Lama to cancel or postpone the visit, the Dalai Lama disagreed strongly. He did not think the Chinese would do anything untoward to him and insisted there was no danger, so he instructed that his visit on the tenth should proceed as planned. This, as was discussed earlier, led to the secret instigation by monk officials in the Dalai Lama's Secretariat of a demonstration by Lhasa residents for the tenth. By spreading rumors that the Chinese were going to abduct the Dalai Lama from their Military Headquarters and take him to Beijing, they fomented a massive demonstration of Lhasa residents at Norbulinga on the morning of the tenth to "save" the Dalai Lama by preventing him from going to the performance. This demonstration quickly turned unruly and anti-Chinese, and to an extent, also anti-Kashag, so the Dalai Lama and his senior government officials found themselves unable to control the demonstrators, who would not obey orders from the Kashag or the Dalai Lama to disperse.

Consequently, in the end, it was not the Chushigandru insurrection in Lhoka, but the morphing of the 10 March demonstration into an ad hoc anti-Chinese uprising that quickly brought down the final curtain on the Dalai Lama's government and on Tibet's unique Buddhist civilization. In essence, that was the price Tibet paid for the failure of the Dalai Lama and the Kashag to take steps to successfully manage/control the demonstration of the Lhasa mimang at Norbulinga, a situation that the Dalai Lama, as cited earlier, knew was a disaster in progress,

> I was certain that what they were doing could only lead to disaster if they continued, and as Head of State I had to try by every means to curb their feelings and stop them bringing about their own destruction under the weight of the Chinese army.[5]

---

[5] Dalai Lama 1977, 187–88.

However, he and the Kashag did not, in fact, "try every means" to stop them, and what they did do, as was seen, only further emboldened the demonstrators, transforming this into an unplanned "uprising" against Chinese rule. Seven days later, the Dalai Lama was persuaded to flee from Lhasa to southern Tibet/India, and four days after that, the Chinese opened fire and the "battle for Lhasa" began. It was a rout, taking the PLA only forty-six hours and fifty-five minutes to defeat the Tibetans in Lhasa, after which they dissolved the Tibetan government, imprisoned those involved in the uprising, and implemented land and class reforms. As we saw in the Shalu Monastery example, the old society ended abruptly.

Thinking about the tremendous consequences of the 10 March incident for Tibetan history, I asked the Dalai Lama in 1994 whether he thought that the Lhasa Uprising could have been avoided. His response was revealing.

> The tenth of March, I think that could have been extended. For example if it had not been decided that I was to go to the show, then most probably the March tenth uprising would not have taken place. . . .
>
> However, the situation in the south with Chushigandru was very bad. The Chinese will not leave this alone, right? They will continually suppress. If one asks if the situation at Lhasa could have been postponed for a while, probably it could have been. If it could have been postponed, and then if one asks, what benefit would have come from that, then it is very difficult [to say].
>
> Anyway, that happened [the Sichuan revolt], and when one looks at it now, there was nothing that we could have done. Things happened from Kham, and it was beyond our control. It was like a flood bursting. It was never something that we had planned nor something that we could have controlled. It happened, and all we could do was look at it and say, "What to do?"
>
> After we came to India in 1959, Gadrang [the jigyab khembo] used to say he wished something like this had not happened. Sometimes [he said], I think that if you had continued to stay in Tibet while continually complaining [to the TWC/Chinese], perhaps so many people would not have died. [However,] when the Cultural Revolution took place, then all my regret vanished. What we did was not a mistake at all. Whether the uprising took place at Lhasa or not, the turmoil would have taken place in China itself. When something like that happens, then it is a situation that would be totally hopeless. Isn't it? The Cultural Revolution was not something that we brought to them. That would have definitely come [to us].
>
> If the Cultural Revolution had not taken place, then that is a different situation. If the Tibetan uprising had not taken place, then it is different. So Gadrang said that he now had no regrets at all. Until then [the Cultural Revolution], he did recall moments when he wondered whether the Dalai Lama's coming to India was a mistake or not. So this is what he said.[6]

---

6. Dalai Lama, interview, India, 1994, H.0019.04.

Other important officials in exile, like Khenjung Tara, the head of the Dalai Lama's Private Secretary's Office, also felt that way.[7]

As the Dalai Lama explained, had he accepted his advisors' urgings on 9 March and agreed not to go to the show the next day, there would have been no Lhasa Uprising. Similarly, if the demonstration had not been deliberately fomented by his own monk officials on the ninth, probably under instructions from his Lord Chamberlain Phala, there also would have been no demonstration and thus no uprising. But there were also other options that could have been used even after the demonstrators had assembled at Norbulinga on the tenth. For example, if the Dalai Lama had deployed his six or seven hundred Bodyguard Regiment troops to either force the crowd to make way for his car to go to the performance, or to have them disperse the crowd entirely, there also would have been no Lhasa Uprising. And he could have ordered this immediately, because the Bodyguard Regiment's barracks were located at Norbulinga, so these troops were ready and on hand, and their commander was the Dalai Lama's brother-in-law. In addition, there were also Trapchi Regiment troops already deployed on the streets near Norbulinga, and more troops could have been summoned from Lhasa quickly. If the demonstrators had been dispersed by these and the Dalai Lama had gone to the performance and later returned to Norbulinga, the Dalai Lama and his government would have continued to exercise internal autonomy as before.

But for how long? The Dalai Lama argued that dispersing the demonstrators would not have made much difference, because when the Cultural Revolution reached Tibet in 1966, all would have all been destroyed anyway. Perhaps. *But perhaps not.*

Ngabö, the kalön who sided most closely with the Chinese and knew most about Chinese policies, disagreed strongly with the Dalai Lama about this. He said emphatically, "If the Dalai Lama had stayed still [in Lhasa], and if the revolt in 1959 hadn't taken place in Tibet, the Cultural Revolution would not have happened. . . . I can guarantee that the Cultural Revolution would not have happened *in Tibet* if the Dalai Lama had stayed in Tibet. There was no reason to have the Cultural Revolution in Tibet. The Cultural Revolution was not allowed to operate in border areas. It was in China proper that there was a reason for it."[8]

Ngabö carried this further and suggested that if the Lhasa Uprising had been avoided, and if the Dalai Lama had then committed to working actively to cooperate with the Chinese, and if he had showed them, as Ngabö was advising, that he was willing to take concrete progressive steps to improve the life and livelihood of the poor peasants, the Tibetan government would have been able to continue to function. Ngabö was arguing, therefore, that the Dalai Lama could have maintained his internal autonomy over Tibet if he had been willing to create a more socially acceptable society by, for example, gradually eliminating the anachronistic manorial estate system with its hereditarily bound peasant labor force.[9] Ngabö, like Nehru, believed that Tibet's Buddhist society could have continued with monks and monasteries being funded in other ways than manorial estates, and he used to always say that it was better to wear a hat [reforms] made specifically for your own head, than have to wear one made for someone else's. He thought that an autonomous Tibet headed by the Dalai Lama, with the essence of Tibetan culture and religion intact, could have been sustained beyond the Cultural Revolution if the Dalai Lama became a positive force in winning over Tibetans to being part of China.

---

[7] Paljor Tsarong, personal communication, February 2018, based on his conversation with Tara.

[8] Ngabö, interview, China, 1995, H.0040.04.

If Ngabö was correct, and it is very possible he was given Mao's investment in the success of his gradualist policy, then the Dalai Lama and his government could well have still been heading an internally autonomous Tibet when Deng Xiaoping came to power in 1978–79. And if the Dalai Lama's internal governmental autonomy had lasted that long, it could have continued after that, so there might still be a version of a Tibetan local government under the Dalai Lama administrating autonomously in Tibet now. This, of course, is one of those speculative historical what-ifs that can never be adequately answered, but it is intriguing to consider what might have happened had the Dalai Lama and his key advisors taken decisive steps to stop the unplanned disturbance/uprising, instead of quickly taking steps to flee to India.

However, what about the Chushigandru problem?

As the Dalai Lama said, even if the 10 March incident had been promptly dealt with and the Dalai Lama's internal autonomy had continued, the situation in Lhasa would still have been problematic and unstable because of the unresolved Khamba rebel problem. However, if the Dalai Lama had reassessed the costs and benefits of his options regarding Chushigandru and decided that the benefit of maintaining his internal autonomy and Tibetan Buddhist institutions took precedence, he could have ordered that serious action be taken to stop Chushigandru. Moreover, since the Dalai Lama would have been going to Beijing in just a few weeks (in April) to attend the Second National People's Congress meeting, he very well could have worked out some arrangement with Mao at that time, for example, having the PLA and the Tibetan army cooperate in confronting the Khambas, but with the PLA taking the lead.

This, of course, did not happen. So when the uprising started in Lhasa on 10 March, Phala and Surkhang did not look to take tough measures to disperse the demonstrators but rather set out to get the Dalai Lama out of Lhasa as soon as possible, both for his own safety and because any exile resistance movement needed the Dalai Lama as its leader and spokesman in the international arena. The Dalai Lama, however, was still ambivalent about the efficacy of leaving Tibet. Earlier, when he was attending the Buddha Jayanti celebrations in 1956/57, many officials had tried to persuade him to give up Tibet and to stay in India but had failed. But this time, in 1959, with no control over either the Khambas who were increasing their attacks against the Chinese or the mimang who were refusing to obey the Kashag / Dalai Lama in Lhasa, they finally succeeded in persuading him to flee to exile in India, where he has remained.

---

[9] Ibid. The Dalai Lama had supported Ngabö's idea to start his own Reform Office in 1952, and it actually implemented some good reforms regarding old loans and the manner in which taxes were collected, but it had been unable to address the underlying problem, the manorial estate system.

In the end, therefore, the decisions that were taken in the 1957–59 period led to outcomes that neither the Dalai Lama nor Mao Zedong had sought or wanted. On the Chinese side, while Mao wanted democratic reforms implemented in Tibet at some point in time, he did not want it done that way. As a result of having to resort to force, Mao and the Central Committee now found themselves confronted by exactly the situation that they had tried so hard to avoid in 1950–51, that is, the emergence of a "Tibet Question" in the international arena led by the Dalai Lama, which challenged (and still challenges) the legitimacy of China's incorporation of Tibet and their assertion of sovereignty over Tibet. This consequence of the failure of Mao's gradualist policy continues right to the present. This failure also validated the ideas of Fan Ming and others, who argued that the gradualist policy was too lenient. Had a tougher policy like that advocated by Fan Ming been utilized, there would have been no uprising, no Dalai Lama in exile, and no Tibet Question in the international arena.[10]

And on the Tibetan side, despite the very promising initial situation in 1957 that made it seem as if the Dalai Lama's internal autonomy and Tibet's Buddhist way of life would continue for years to come, two years later it was over and Tibet's unique Buddhist civilization was ended almost overnight.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Dalai Lama and Gadrang, in retrospect, regretted their decision to flee Lhasa so quickly. Not only was Tibet lost, but in exile, little was gained politically. Despite the previous talk by Tibetan émigré groups in India, especially his older brother Gyalo Thondup, that Tibet's right to independence would come to be accepted by the international community and the United States, this did not happen, and that is not surprising.

From the start of American relations with Tibet in the 1940s, the United States only recognized Tibetan autonomy under China, and this policy continued after the Dalai Lama arrived in India in 1959. The U.S. government, to be sure, was helpful to the Dalai Lama in exile, providing him with funds and organizing/funding a new Chushigandru military base in Mustang, Nepal,[11] but it would not help with respect to the key issue for the Dalai Lama: securing international recognition of Tibet's independence and recognition of a Tibetan government-in-exile headed by the Dalai Lama.

---

[10] Fan Ming, interview, Xi'an, 1993.

For example, when the Dalai Lama sent a message to the United States in April 1959 asking that "the United States recognize the Free Tibetan Government and influence other countries to do so." Washington refused.

The U.S. Secretary of State responded in a memorandum to President Eisenhower:

> Recognition is a political act and we could grant recognition when publicly asked if such a step is in the national interest. In response to previous approaches from the Dalai Lama in 1949–51, we refrained from committing ourselves to recognition of Tibet as an independent state. We continue to recognize both the claim of the Republic of China to suzerainty over Tibet and Tibet's claim to de facto autonomy.[12]

The Secretary of State also warned Eisenhower that the United States must "avoid taking a position which might encourage the Dalai Lama to seek international recognition."[13] Moreover, with respect to the United Nations, the Eisenhower administration, at this critical time in Tibetan history, forced the Dalai Lama to make Tibet's case against China one that was based on human rights grounds, not political grounds, that is to say, not based on China having invaded and conquered Tibet and that Tibet is now a "captive nation." As I wrote in an earlier article, the Eisenhower administration

> constrained the Tibetans from presenting a political case to the United Nations (UN) that would have accused the PRC of aggression against an independent country. Instead the United States pressured the Dalai Lama to refer to the suffering of the Tibetan people and human rights when making his case against China. This distinction was emphasized by CIA Director Allen Dulles at a meeting of the U.S. National Security Council (NSC) on 10 September 1959. The notes from that meeting indicate that "Mr Dulles then took up Tibet. . . . The U.S. has felt that he [the Dalai Lama] should not, in his presentation to the U.N., emphasize aggression, since Tibet was for many years a part of China. In our view, his case is stronger on a human rights basis."[14]

So while the Dalai Lama in exile has become a world-renowned spiritual leader, as a political leader he has been far less successful. He has been able to keep the

---

[11] In 1964, for example, the CIA provided a total of USD 1,735,000 in support, including $500,000 for the support of 2,100 Tibetan guerrillas in Nepal; $180,000 as a subsidy for the Dalai Lama; $225,000 for equipment, transportation, and training; and $400,000 for covert training in Colorado ("Memorandum for the Special Group," 9 January 1964, in FRUS, 1964–1968, vol. XXX, 731).

[12] Goldstein 2006, 150.

[13] Ibid., 151–52.

[14] See Goldstein 1997, 97–99.

Tibet Question alive internationally, but six decades after leaving Tibet, he is no closer to securing international recognition of Tibet's right to independence from China than before he fled, and perhaps even less, in large part because of the fundamental limitations inherent in America's China policy. Consequently, the Dalai Lama's decisions in the 1957–59 period, ironically, have left him precisely where he did not wanted to end up, that is, with "no dung on the hill over there and no carrying basket on the hill over here."

In the end, therefore, the history of Sino-Tibet relations in the 1950s shows that the Lhasa Uprising in 1959 and its aftermath was not inevitable. There were significant options that could have changed that outcome, and in a sense, that is as much a part of the history of the 1950s as what actually transpired.

APPENDIX A

List of Correct Tibetan Spellings

Correct Tibetan spelling	Phonetic approximation
Abo Yontan	a po yon tan
Ali	mnga’ ris
Alo Chöndze	a lo chos mdzad
Alo Dawa	a lo zla ba
Amdo	a mdo
Amdo Lekshey	a mdo legs bshad
Amdo Nyingpo	a mdo snying po
Amdowa	a mdo ba
Andru Gombo Tashi	a ‘brug mgon po bkra shis
Andrug Jinda	a ‘brug spyin bdag
Andrutsang (Gombo Tashi)	a ‘brug tshang (mgon po bkra shis)
Angula	a ‘gug lags
Abo Rabgye	a po rab rgyas
Aptru	a phrug
Athar	a thar
Atsong	a tshong
Baba	‘ba’ pa
Baba Gen Ale	‘ba’ pa rgan a le
Baba Gen Yeshe	‘ba’ pa rgan ye shes
Bachung Pön	sba chung dpon
badzalaga	bar tsa lag ga
bagchen	bag chen
Bala	ba la
Baligyesum	‘ba li rgyal gsum
Barkokali	brag sgo kar ne
barkor	bar skor

Barshi (tsendrön) (jedrungla)	bar gzhis (rtse mgron) (rje drung lags)
Batang	‘ba’ thang
Began Lotsawa	dpal khang lo tsa ba
Benza (drukha)	ban rtsa
Bisu (Jola)	spel zur (jo lags)
Böd mimang	bod mi dmangs
bögü or bökü	‘bod skul
Bombora	spom po ra
Bon	bon
bugbu	sbug pu
bugbug	sbug sbug
bugdam	sbug dam
Butön	bu ston
Bumtang Chömpe Thubden	‘bum thang chos ‘phel thub bstan
Buthug Chödrag	bu thug chos grags
chabu	phyag sbug
chada	phyag da
Chadang	cha dang
Chagdrung	phyag drung
Chagdrung Lodrö Phuntso	phyag drung blo gros phun tshogs
chagya garpo	bya skyag dkar po
chaknang	phyag nang
Cham	‘cham
Chamba Yönden	byams pa yon tan
Chamdo	chab mdo
Chamdo Dortse	chab mdo rdo tshe
Chamdo jingdrü uyön lhengang	chab mdo bcings ‘grol u yon lhan khang
Chamdo Trungyik Küncho Dorje	chab mdo drung yig dkon mcgog rdo rje
chandzö	phyag mdzod
chang	byang
chang namtsokha	byang gnam mtsho kha
Changchub Jimpa	byang ‘chub sbyin pa
Changji	byang spyi
Changkyim	chang khyim
changmag	byang dmag
Changra Khenjung	lcang ra mkhan chung
Chantreng (pa)	cha ‘phreng (pa)
Chape	chab spel
charshi mepa	‘char gzhi med pa
Che Jigme	ce ‘jigs med
Chela	bye la
chemmo	chen mo
cheshung	byes gzhung
chibgyur chemmo	chibs sgyur chen mo
Chimed Gombo	‘chi med mgon po
Chö Bulü	chos bu lus
Chödegön	chos sde dgon
Chödrag	chos grags
Chöjin legung	mchod sbyin las khungs

choley namgye	phyogs las rnam rgyal
Chölung	chos lung
Chölung Nanga (Chölungnanga)	chos lung nang pa
Chömphel	chos ‘phel
Chongye	‘phyong rgyas
Chongye Riudechen	‘phyong rgyas ri bo bde chen
Chönkorgye	chos ‘khor rgyal
chöpön khembo	mchod dpon mkhan po
chösi nyiden	chos srid gnyis len
chösi sungdrol	chos srid zung ‘brel
Choying Wangmo	chos dbyings dbang mo
Chudo Pön	chu rdo dpon
Chupa	phyu pa
Chudangmo	chu dwangs mo
Chumbi	chu ‘bi
Chundokyang	chu mdo kyang
chundru	chu ‘brug
chundru mimang thrötsog	mi dmangs gros tshogs
Chushigandru	chu bzhi sgang drug
Chushul	chu shur
Dagden phodrang	rtag brtan pho brang
Dagkong Jigyab	dwags kong spyi khyab
dago shar	ltag sgo shar
Dakpo	dwags po
Damba	dan ‘bag
Dambag Shanggo	dan ‘bag zhang go
Damba Simkhang	dan ‘bag gzim khang
Damba Lodrö	dan ‘bag blo gros
damsang	gtam bzang
Damshung	‘dam gzhung
Dartsedo	dar rtse mdo
dayig	brda yig
Dedön tsogpa	bde don tshogs pa
Dekharwa	bde mkhar ba
Dekyilingka	bde skyid gling pa
denbo	brtan po
denshu	gdan zhu
densung tanglang mag	bstan srung dang blangs dmag
depön	mda’ dpon
Derge (Sey)	sde dge (sras)
Deyangshar	bde yangs shar
dingkha	lding khag
Dingri	ding ri
dobdo	ldab ldob
dodar	rdo bsdar
döde	sdod bde
dogjen	‘dogs can
dogtab	bzlog thabs
doji	mdo spyi

Dokham	mdo khams
Dokhar	mdo mkhar
Dokharsumdo	mdo mkhar sum mdo
Dombor (Kyenrab Wangchuk)	gdong por (mkhyen rab dbang phyug)
Dombor (Ngawang Rigdrol)	gdong por (ngag dbang rig grol)
dor	stor
Dorje Tseden	rdo rje tshe brtan
dotse	rdo tshad
dra chagbo	‘dra chags po
Drakten	grags btsan
Dranang	gra nang
dra tsö drey malönpa	dgra tshod dgras ma lon pa
Drepung	‘bras spungs
Drewa	‘brel ba
Drichu	‘bri chu
Drigu (thang)	gri gur (thang)
Drigu Langmothang	grii gur glang mo thang
Drigung	‘bri gung
Drigung Kyamgön Rinpoche	‘bri gung skyabs mgon rin po che
Drigung Lungshö	‘bri gung klung shod
Drigung Thil	‘bri gung thil
Drigutang	gri gur thang
Drigutso	gri gur mtsho
drogyang	‘gro rkyang
drönteb	mgron deb
drönyerchemmo	mgron gnyer chen mo
drukha	gru kha
drungja	drung ja
drungtog	drung gtogs
dü	bdud
düjung	dud chung
Dündül (Chöying)	bdud ‘dul chos dbyings
dung	dung
Dunggar	dung dkar
Dzachu	rdza chu
dzadra tsondu gyendzom	rdza drag tshogs ‘du rgyas ‘dzoms
dzasa (Mingyiling)	dza sag (smon skyid glings pa)
dzingra	‘dzing ra
dzögö	mdzod gos
Dzogchen Pema Rindzin	rdzogs chen pad ma rig ‘dzin
dzong	rdzong
dzongpön	dzong dpon
Dzomtang	‘dzoms thang
dzüma	rdzus ma
E Chundogyang	e chu mdo kyang
Edrung	e drung
ga	ga
Gaba	sga pa

Gadang	ga dang
gadrang	dga’ brang
gadrukpa	gar phrug pa
gadrung	bka’ drung
gagkyen	‘gag rkyen
gagökang	bkag bkod khang
gagö magjikhang	bka’ bkod dmag spyi khang
gagteb	‘gag deb
gagya	bka ‘rgya
Gambala	gam pa la
gambo	sgam po
Ganden	dga’ ldan
Ganden Chöngor	dga’ ldan chos ‘khor
Ganden Ngamjö	dga’ ldan lnga mchod
Ganden Phodrang	dga’ ldan pho brang
Gangbu	sgang bu
Ganzi	dkar mdzes
Garpön	gar dpon
garthig	dkar thig
Gartok	sgar thog
Ge mabin ma shö	kas ma bin ma shod
gegen	dge rgan
gekyen	‘gal rkyen
Gelek Phüntso	dge legs phun tshogs
Gelong	dge slong
Gelugpa	dge lugs pa
Gempe Utse	dge ‘phel dbu rtse
Gen Chödrak	rgan chos grags
Gendün	dge ‘dun
Gerwa Drugu	sger ba gru kha
geshe	dge bshes
geshe lharamba	dge bshes lha ram pa
Gesar	ge sar
Getö	dge stod
Giamda	rgya mda’
go debo	mgo bde po
Gökhar La	rgod ‘khar la
gojen	mgo can
golag dangnyer	go lag bdag gnyer
Gombo Chödrag	mgon po chos grags
Gombo Tashi	mgon po bkra shis
Gombo Tsering	mgon po tshe ring
Gonggar	gong dkar
gongda thuten shü	dgongs dag thugs bden zgu
Gonjo	go ‘jo
Gopön Nyerpala	ko dpon gnyer pa
Göshampa	rgod gsham pa
gucha	sku phywa

gülung	skul slong
Gungru Khentrü	gung rum khan sprul
gusung	sku srung
Gutor	dgu gtor
Gyadotsang	rgya rdo tshang
Gyadotsang Lagen	rgya rdo tshang bla rgan
Gyadotsang Wangdü	rgya rdo tshang dbang ‘dus
gyagpön	brgya dpon
Gyagpön Kedram	brgya dpon skal dgram lags
Gyalo La	rgya lo lags
Gyalo Thondup	rgya lo don grub
Gyalrong khembo	rgyal rong mkhan po
Gyama ngüchu	rgya mo dngul chu
Gyambumgang	rgya ‘bum sgang
Gyamgön	skyabs mgon
gyami ngönbo	rgya mi sngon po
Gyamtso Tashi Thubten Changchub	rgya mtsho bkra shis thub bstan byang chub
Gyamtsoling (Rinpoche)	rgya mtsho gling (Rin po che)
Gyantse	rgyal rtse
Gyarong Khembo	rgyal rong mkhan po
gyashog	brgya shog
Gyeda	dge stag?
Gyegyepa	Dge rgyas pa
gyekhab	rgyal khab
Gyeltang	rgyal thang
Gyentsen Tempel	rgyal mtshan bstan ‘phel
Gyetong	rgyas stong
gyidu tsongka jigdri	skyid sdug zong kha gcig sgril
gyümey	rgyud smad
injungla	in chung lags
Jabo	sbyar po ba
Jagö Namgyal Dorje	bya rgod rnam rgyal rdo rje
Jagsam Drukha	lcags zam gru kha
Jama Ngagdrug	bya ma ngag drug
Jama Samphel	bya ma bsam ‘phel
Jambey Gyatso	‘jam dpal rgya mtsho
Jangjenlogo Lokela	lcang can blo khog blo skal lags
Jangji Lhagye	byang ri lha rgyal
Janglocen Wanam	lcang lo can dbang nams
Jangra Lekshe	lcang ra legs bshad
Jangra Tashi	lcang ra bkris
Jangri Lhagye	lcang ri lha rgyal
Jangtsa Chöndze	‘jang rtsa chos mdzad
Jawdang	lcog steng
Jayang Wöser	‘jam dbyangs ‘od zer
Jayangkyil	‘jam dbyangs dkyil
Jayangshar	‘jam dbyangs shar
Jedeshöl	lce bde zhol

jedey	rjes bsdad
jendren	spyan ‘dren
Jenkhentsisum	gcen mkhan rtsis gsum
Jenselingga	spyan gsal gling ga
Jigje mahe	‘jigs byed ma he
Jigje Lhagang	‘jigs byed lha khang
Jigme Dorje	‘jigs med rdo rje
Jigyab Khembo	spyi khyab mkhan po
Jimpa Gyatso	spyi pa rgya mtsho
jiso	spyi so
jitso nyingpa	spyi tshogs rnying pa
jitso sarpa	spyi tshogs gsar pa
Jo Rinpoche	jo bo rin po che
Jogpori	lcags po ri
Jogtsela	lcog rtse la
Jokhang	jo khang
Jüba	‘jus pa
jü ngen	jus ngan
Jünpa	‘jun pa
Jyekundo	skye rgu mdo
Kadam	bka’ dam
Kadrung	bka’ drung
Kagyüpa	bka’ rgyud
kalön	bka’ blon
Kandrön	bka’ mgron
Kangyur	bka’ ‘gyur
Kanting	mkhan po thing
Kapshöba	ka shod pa
Kargang	bkar khang
Karmapa	skar ma pa
Karupön	dkar ru dpon
Kashag	bka’ shag
Kashag shöba	bka’ shag shod pa
Kasur	bka’ zur
Kasur Lhalu (Tsewang Dorje)	bka’ zur lha klu (Tshe dbang rdo rje)
Katsab	bka’ tshab
Kedram	skal dgram
Kesang	skal bzang
Kelsang Chönzin	skal bzang chos ‘dzin
Kelsang Dramdü	skal bzang dgra ‘dul
Kelsang Ngawang	skal bzang ngag dbang
Kelsang Wangchug	skal bzang dbang phyug
Kelsang Yeshe	skal bzang ye shes
khadang	kha dang
khagbo shetra rey	khag po zhe drag red
Kham	khams
Khamba	khams pa
Khambe amjo gubla yö	khams pa’i am cog rkub la yod

khambey singja jagthab dang zhongyang gomba dangthab	khams pa’i zing cha ‘jags thabs dang krung dbyang gong pa dwangs thabs
khamtsen	khang tshan
Kharchen Chandzö	mkhar chen phyag mdzod
khata	kha btags
khe	khal
Khembo	mkhan po
Kheme (Dzasa) (Tsewang Thöndrub	mkhe smad (rdza sa) (tshe dbang don grub)
Khence	mkhan che
Khendrung	mkhan drung
Khenjung	mkhan chung
Khenjung Kelsang Ngawang	mkhan chung skal bzang ngag dbang
Khenjung Lobsang Tenzin	mkhan chung blo bzang bstan ‘dzin
Khenjung Tara	mkhan chung rta ra
Khenjung Thubden Sampo	mkhan chung thub bstan bzang po
Khensur	mkhan zur
kho dongsho/ ma ga	kho gtong shog/ ma bkag
khyebar mindu	khyad par mi ‘dug
Khyungpo Tengchen	khyung po steng chen
ko drochug/ ko dongsho	kho ‘gro chug/ kho gtong zhog
Könchog Rinchen	dkon mchog rin chen
khongdog tsam yin khül	khongs gtogs tsam yin khul
Kongpo	kong po
Kongpo Gyashing	kong po rgya zhing
korchagpa	skor ‘chag pa
Koshang Khamtsen	sgo shang khang mtsan
kudrak	sku drag
Kunga Samden	kun dga’ bsam gdan
Kunga Wangdü	kun dga’ dbang ‘dus
Kumbum	sku ‘bum
Künam	kun rnam
Kundeling (dzasa) (Wöser Gyentsen)	kun bde gling (rdza sag) (‘od zer rgyal mtshan)
Kundeling Tatongwa	kun bde gling rta gtong ba
kungö	sku ngo
Kungö Trekhang	sku ngo bkras khang
Künsangla	kun bzang lags
Kuruku	ku ru ku
Kusung	sku srung
Kyangthang Naga	rkyang thang na kha
Kyamgön	skyabs mgon
kyamra	‘khyam ra
Kyichu	skyid chu
kyidu	skyid sdug
Kyitöpa	skyid stod pa
la	la
Labrang	bla brang
Laja Lheding Sey	bla phyag lha lding sras
Laja Tempa	bla phyag bstan pa
lamrim (Chenmo)	lam rim (chen mo)

Lamathang	bla ma thang
lamyik	lam yig
laso laso	lags so lags so
ledrung	las drung
leydön ruga	las don ru khag
legjö	legs bcos
legjö leygung	legs bcos las khungs
lha	lha
lhagang	lha khang
Lhagyari	lha rgya ri
Lhalu	lha klu
Lhalungpa	lha lung pa
Lhamo	lha mo
Lhamo Tsering	lho mo tshe ring
Lhamön, Yeshe Tsultrim	lha smon ye shes tshul khrims
lhapsö	lha gsol
lharamba	lha ram ba
Lharigo	lha ri ‘go
Lhasa	lha sa
Lhautara	lha’u rta ra
Lhautara Thubden Tenthar	lhau rta rat hub bstan bstan dar
Lheding (sey)	lha sding (sras)
lhendung	lhan dung
Lho Dzong (Lhodzong)	lho rdzong
Lhoji	lho spyi
Lhoka	Lho kha
Lhorong	lho rong
Lhotö	lho stod
Lhüntse	lhun rtse
Ling (Rinpoche)	gling (rin po che)
Linga sarpa	glinga pa gsar pa
Lingga	gling ga
Lingor	gling skor
Litang	li thang
Litang Athar (Norbu)	li thang a thar (nor bu)
Litang Kunga Samden	li thang kun dga’ bsam gtan
Litangba	li tang pa
Liushar	sne’u shar
lobjong uyön lhengang	slob sbyong u yon lhan khang
Lobsang Palden	blo bzang dpal ldan
Lobsang Phüntso	blo bzang phun tshogs
Lobsang Rigdzin	blo bzang rig ‘dzin
Lobsang Samden	blo bzang bsam gtan
Lobsang Tashi	blo bzang bkra shis
Lobsang Tsültrim	blo bzang tshul khrims
Lobsang Yeshe	blo bzang ye shes
Lobsang Yönden	blo bzang yon tan
Lodrö Chönzin	blo gros chos ‘dzin
Lodrö Kesang	blo gros skal bzang

Lodrö Phüntso	blo gros phun tshogs
logag	lo skag
lökhebo rebey/ denden rebey	blos ‘khel po red pas/ gtan gtan red pas
Londen	blo ldan
Lonphel Tsültrim	blo ‘phel thshul khrims
Loseling	blo gsal gling
Lotsa Ngawang Senge	lo tsa ngag dbang seng ge
Lotse	blo tshe
Lukhang	klu khang
Lukhang Drukha	klu khang gru kha
Lukhangwa (Tsewang Rabden)	klu khang ba (tshe dbang rab ldan)
ma che ma da	ma byed ma lta
Machu	Rma chu
magdön lengü	dmag don las ‘gul
magji	dmag spyi
magji gagökang	dmag spyi bka’ bkod khang
magjigang	dmag spyi khang
magsi legung	dmag srid las khungs
Magsi uyön ljengang	dmag srid u yon lhan khang
magtrim	dmag khrims
Mala	ma la
Manang Abo	Ma nang a pho
mang	dmangs
mangja	mang ja
Markham	smar khams
Mashung	rma gzhung
Maya	rma bya
mejar	me car
mendredensum	man dral rten gsum
Mi de nor bu gling ga thon song	mi de nor bu gling ga thon song
mibo	mi bogs
migbe dasa	mig dpe lta sa
mimang	mi dmangs; mi mang
mimang tanglangtshö göjü tangdzin	mi mang dwang blangs tsho’i bkod byus stangs ‘dzin
mimang thrötso	mi dmangs gros tshogs
mimang thrötsog	mi dmangs gros tshogs
mimang tsogpa	mi dmangs tshogs pa
mimang tsondu	mi dmangs tshogs ‘du
Minkyiling	smon skyid gling
Minyag	mi nyag
Mipön	mi dpon
miser	mi ser
mitsa yüügu	mi rtsa yul ‘gug
Mönlam	smon lam
mönlam torgyag	smon lam gtor rgyag
Mön Tawang	mon rta dbang
Muru	rme ru
Muru Nyingma	rme ru rnying pa

Nagchu	nag chu
Nagchuka	nag chu kha
Namgyal Dorje	rnam rgyal rdo rje
Namgyal Gyatso	rnam rgyal rgya mtsho
Namgyal wangdü	rnam rgyal dbang ‘dus
Namling	rnam gling
Namru	gnam ru
Namseling	rnam sras gling
Namseling Panjor Jigme	rnam sras gling dpal ‘byor ‘jigs med
Namtso	rnam mtsho
Nangkarste	snang dkar rtse
Nangmagang	nang ma sgang
nangsen	nang gzan
Narag	na rag
Naragtsang	na rag tshang
Narkyid	snar skyid
Nechung	gnas chung
neden changjö	gnas brtan phyag mchod
neden jutrug	gnas brtan bcu drug
Nedong	sne gdong
Neu	sne’u
Ngabö	nga phod
Ngachen	rnga chen
Ngadag	mnga’ bdag
Ngadang	nga dang
ngala yugü ma nünna	rnga la dbyu gus ma snun na
ngagpa	sngags pa
Ngari	mnga’ ris
ngarpo	ngar po
Ngawang Chömphel	nag dbang chos ‘phel
Ngawang Dadrag	ngag dbang zla grags
Ngawang Legden	ngag dbang legs ldan
Ngawang Rigdrol	ngag dbang rigs grol
Ngawang Senge	ngag dbang seng ge
Ngawang Temba	ngag dbang bstan pa
Ngawang Thondrup	ngag dbang don grub
Ngawang Yönten	ngag dbang yon tan
ngogösum dang chayag nyi ngöndzi goggey	ngo rgol gsum dang chag yang gnyis mngon brtsi lkog ‘gal
ngönju	sngon ‘jug
Norbulingka	nor bu gling kha
Norling	nor gling
norling gusung gagökang	nor gling sku srung bka’ bkod khang
Nortölinga	nor stod gling kha
Noryon lama	nor yon bla ma
Numa	nu ma
Nyango Drukha	nya mgo gru kha
Nyara	myang ral; nyag dbre
Nyarong (ba)	nyag rong (pa)

nyechen	nyes chen
nyegö	brnyas brko
Nyemo	snye mo
Nyemo Shuyaga	snye mo gzhu ya gag
Nyenang Shoshar	gnyal nang sho shar
nyerpa	gnyer pa
nyertsang	gnyer tshang
nyechen	nyes chen
Nyetang	mnyes thang
Nyingma (pa)	rnying ma (pa)
Nyingpo	snying po
Nyintri	nying khri
Palden Gyatso	dpal ldan rgya mtsho
Palden Lhamo	dpal ldan lha mo
Panchen Rinpoche	pan chen rin po che
Panglung Gyalchen	spang lung rgyal chen
Pari	phag ri
Pashö	dpa’ shod
pecha	spe cha
Pejö	dpal chos
Pemagö	pad ma bkod
Pemakö	pad ma bskod
Pembar	dpal ‘bar
Pharo maro	pha ro ma ro
Phagpalha	‘phags pa lha
Phala Chandzö Pegong	pha lha phyag mdzod spel gong
Phala (Thubten Wönden)	pha lha (thub bstan ‘od ldan)
Phala Phogpön (Dorje Wangdü)	phal ha phogs dpon (rdo rje dbang ‘dus)
Phara Jiso	pha ra spyi bso
Phari	phag ri
Phempo	‘phan po
phö dang phö chembo	bod dang bod chen po
phodrang sarpa	pho brang gsar pa
phogang	phog khang
phögi tendon tsogpa	bod kyi bstan don tshogs pa
Phu Dündül	bu bdud ‘dul
Phuma Rignam	phu ma rig rnam
Phundra	phun bkra
Phünkang Lhajam	phun khang lha lcam
Phüntso Gyatso	Phun tshogs rgya mtsho
Phüntso Tomden	Phun tshogs stobs ldan
Phüntso Wangyal (Wangye)	phun tshogs dbang rgyal
Phüntsog Yügye	phun tshogs g.yu rgyal
Phünwang	phun dbang
phusum pharma	bu gsum bar ba
Phurba Trinley	phur pa ‘phrin las
po	spo
pö, Pöba	bod, bod pa
Pome	spo smad

pön	dpon
pön tharne yog mathar	dpon thar nas g.yog ma thar
Potala	po ta la
Powo	spo bo
Powogang	spo bo sgang
Powo Tramog	spo bo spra rmog
Powogang	spo bo sgang
Poyü	spo yul
rabjung	rab chung
Radru Ngawang	dbra phrug ngag dbang
Ragashag (Phüntso Rabgye)	rag kha shag (phun tshogs rab rgyas)
Rama	ra ma
Ramagang	ra ma sgang
Ramba Theji	ram pa tha’i ji
Ramba (Thubden Gungyen)	ram pa (thub bstan kun mkhyen)
Ramoche	ram mo che
rangrig rangyü	rang rigs rang yul
rang gyong jong	rang skyong ljong
rangsung	rang srung
rang ‘gul	rang ‘gul
Rara	rag ra
Ratö Rinpoche	ra stod rin po che
Ratö Labrang Chantsö	ra stod bla brang phyag mdzod
Rawa	dbra ba
Reting (Rinpoche)	rwa sgreng (rin po che)
Rimshi Shagjang Surpa (Ngawang Gyentsen)	rim bzhi shag byang zur pa (ngag dbang rgyal mtshan)
Rinchengang	rin chen sgang
Rinpoche	rin po che
Rong Lukhang	rong klu khang
Rongnamse	rong rnam sras
rupön	ru dpon
Sagadawa	sa ga zla ba
sagor	sa skor
Sakya (pa)	sa skya (pa)
Salungpa	sa lung pa
Samada	sa ma mda’
Sambo	bsam pho
Samdra	bsam kra
Samdru Phodrang	bsam grub pho brang
Samjog	bsam mchog
Samye	bsam yas
Sandu (Rinchen)	sa ‘dul (rin chen)
Sandu Lo Nyendra	sa ‘du blo snyan grags
sane sishung	sa gnas srid gzhung
Sangyib	gsang yibs
Sangye Yeshe	sangs rgyas ye shes
Sarchung Sey	gsar byung sras
sarje ngologpa	gsar brje ngo log pa

sashing cügyur	sa zhing bcos bsgyur
Sateng	sa steng
satsig	sa tshig
Sawangchemmo	sa dbang chen mo
semney	sems nad
senriy	zan ril
Sera (Je)	ser ra (byes)
Seshin	zas zhim
Seshing	sreg shing
Sexin	sreg shing
Seysey	gser gser
Shabden lhagang	zhabs brtan lha khang
Shakabpa	zhwa sgab pa
Shalu	zha lu
Shalu (Kushang)	zha lu (sku zhang
Shang Ganden Chöngor	shangs dga’ ldan chos ‘khor
Sharlotsang Chöndze	shar lho tshang chos mdzad
Shasur	bshad zur
Shatra	bshad sgra
Shelkar	shel dkar
Shelling	shel gling
Shengo	zhal ngo
Shenkawa	shan kha ba
Shenkawa Gyurme	shan kha ba ‘gyur med
Sherab Gyatso	shes rab rgya mtsho
Shide	bzhi sde
shiga	gzhis kh
Shigatse	gzhis ka rtse
shiwei jingdrü	zhi ba’i bcings ‘grol
Shöl (pa)	zhol (pa)
Shöl Parkhang	zhol par khang
Shölpa Tatonga	zhol pa rta gtong pa
shöpa	shod pa
Shopando	sho pa mdo
Shopashar	sho pa shar
Shotarlhosum	sho star lho gsum
Shi Apa Pant	
Shugola	shog bu la
Shukja Tsendrön	bzhugs bya tshan mgron
Shukhupa (Jamyang Khedrub)	shud khud pa (‘jam dbangs mkhas grub)
shag	shag
Shalu (Kushang)	zha lu sku zhang
shugu	gzhu gu
shung ganden podrang	gzhung dga’ ldan pho brang
Shundongkar	shun gdong dkar
Shungden	shugs ldan
Sidar	sri thar
Silön	srid blon
Simbö Khembo	gzim dpon mkhan po

Simjung thagor	gzim chung mtha’s skor
gzim chung skor srung dmag	
simpön khembo	gzim dpon mkhan po
singga	gzim ‘gag
singdru	zing ‘khrug
singja	zing cha
Sitsab	srid tshab
Sonam Gombo	bsod nams mgon po
Sonam Gyatso	bsod nams rgya mtsho
Sonam Phuntso	bsod nams phun tshogs
Sonam Tomden	bsod nams stobs ldan
Sonam Tobgye	bsod nams stob rgyas
Sonam Tsering	bsod nams tshe ring
Söpel	bsod dpal
Söpön khembo	gsol dpon mkhan po
srungdö	srung ‘dud
sulu	su lu
sumjupa	sum ju pa
sungjöra (ba)	gsung chos ra (ba)
sungjü rawa	gsung chos ra ba
süntser	bsun btser
Surkhang	zur khang
Surkhang (Wangchen Gelek)	zur khang (dbang chen dge legs)
surtsog	zur tshogs
Surshi lama	zur bzhi bla ma
Ta lama	ta bla ma
Ta Lama Rongnamse Thubden Norsang	ta bla ma rong rnam sras thub bstan nor bzang
Taklha (Phüntso Tashi)	stag lha (phun tshogs bkra shi)
Takste Rinpoche	stag ‘tsher rim po che
Taktruka	stag gru kha
Tamdrin Tashi	rta mgrin bkra shis
Tamdrin Wangyal	rta mgrin dbang rgyal
Tang ngogö tshogpa’i tsowo	tang ngo rgol tshogs pa’i gtso bo
Tanglang Tensung Magar	dang blangs bstan srung dmag sgar
Tara	rta ra
Tara Donga Tharching	rta ram do bsgags mthar phyin
Targye Gomba	dar rgyas dgon pa
Tashi Bera	bkra’ shis dpal rab
Tashi Gelek	bkra’ shis dge legs
Tashi Kharing	bkra’ shis kha ring
Tashi Lingpa	bkra’ shis gling pa
Tashi Tomden	bkra shis stobs ldan
Tashilhunpo	bkra’ shis lhun po
Tashidrag (Teesta)	bkra shis brag
Tatonga	rta gtong ba
Temba [ma] jog Lobsang Nyendra	bstan ma lcog blo bzang snyan grags
Temba Söpa	bstan pa bzod pa
Tempa Targye	bstan pa dar rgya
Tengchen	steng chen

Tenmajog	bstan ma lcog
tensi mirig	bstan srid mi rigs
tensung danglang magar	bstan srung dangs blangs dmag sgar
Tenzin Thundrup	bstan ‘dzin don grub
Thamdzing	‘tham ‘dzing
Tharchin (pa)	mthar phyin (pa)
theiji	tha’ ji
Thrip	grib
thogong powo dringgire	do dgong spo bo spring gi red
Thöndrub Norgye	don grub nor rgyas
Thöndrup Gyentsen	don grub rgyal mtshan
Thonsur	thon zurt
thönja	thon phyag
Thönpa Khenjung (Jampa Khedrub)	thon pa mkhan chung (‘jam pa mkhas grub)
Thowa	do ba
thragor	grwa skor
thrüche sarbey rig	‘phrul chas gsar pa’i rigs
Thubden Changchub	thub bstan byang ‘chub
Thubden Gyalpo	thub bstan rgyal po
Thubden Lengmön	thub bstan legs smon
Thubden Norbu	thub bstan nor bu
Thubden Nyinji	thub bstan nyin byed
Thubden Ramyang	thub bstan rab dbyangs
Thubden Samjog	thub bstan bsam mchog
thukdam	thugs dam
thuksam dzarbang	thugs gsam ‘dzar pang
tö	stod
Tölung Tsurphu	stod lung mtshur phu
Töpa Jamyang trinley	stod pa jam dpal ‘phrin las
torgyag	gtor rgyag
torma	gtor ma
tragshug che	drag shugs che
Tramo	spra rmog
tramang	grwa dmangs
trangga garpo	tram ka dkar po
trang	‘phrang
Trapchi	grwa bzhi
Trapchi gomba	grwa bzhi dgon po
Trapchi Lhamo	grwa bzhi lha mo
tratru	grwa phrug
Traya	brag g.yab
Traya Lama Atru	brag g.yab bla ma a phru
treba	khral pa
treden	khral rten
tregang	khral rkang
trema	sran ma
trenön	khral snon
Trendong	mkhas mthong
trenyog	bran g.yog

Tri Ralpchen	khri ral pa chen
Trijang Rinpoche	khri byang rin po che
trimgey	khrims ‘gal
Trimon	khri smon
Trinley Dorje	bkrin las rdo rje
Trip	grib
tripa	khri pa
Trojikhang	gro spyi khang
Tromo (Ch. Yadong)	gro mo
Tromsigang	khrom gzigs khang
trug	‘khrug
trunggyü	drung dkyus
Trungja	drung ja
Trungyik Küncho Dorje	drung yig dkon mchog rdo rje
Trungla yarsö	‘khrungs lha dbyar gsol
Trungtsi	drung rtsis
Trungtsigye	drung rtsis brgyad
Trunyichemmo	drung gnyer chen mo
Tsadora	tsha rdor ba
Tsakur	tsha khur
tsamba	rtsam pa
tsame	rtsa med
Tsang (pa)	gtsang (pa)
Tsangpo	gtsang po
Tsari	tsa ri
Tsarong (rimshi, dzasa)	tsha rong (rim bzhi, dza sag)
Tsarong Lodrö Traya Lama Atru	tsha rong blo gros brag gyab bla ma a phrug
Tsarong Shape	tsha rong zhabs pad
tsatsig	rtsa tshig
Tsawarong	tsha ba rong
Tse	rtse
Tsecholing	tshe mchog gling
tse ga	rtse ‘gag
Tseden Gombo	tshe brtan mgon po
Tseja	rtse phyag
Tseja Gyentsen	rtse phyag rgyal mtshan
Tselabdra	rtse slob grwa
Tsendrön	rtse mgrong
tsenju	rjes ‘jug
tsenshab	mtshan zhabs
Tsetang	rtsed thang
Tsewang Dorje	tshe dbang rdo rje
Tsewang Gyurme	tshe dbang ‘gyur med
Tsewang Namgyal	tshe dbang rnam rgyal
Tsewang Rinzin	tshe dbang rin ‘dzin
tsepa	rtseg pa
Tsipön Shakabpa	rtsis dpon zhwa kha pa
Tsetang	rtse thang
Tsongpön Abag	tshong dpon a dpag

tsho	tsho
tshog	tshog
Tshomönling	tshe smon gling
Tshurpu	mtshur phu
Tsidrung Letsen Tenmajog	rtse drung las tshan bstan ma lcog
Tsigang	rtsis khang
tsigyag	rtsis rgyag
tsipa	rtsis pa
tsipön	rtsis dpon
tsodrag	gtso drag
Tsogchen (Umdze)	tshogs chen dbu mdzad
tsogchung	tshogs chung
Tsögo	mtsho sgo
Tsögo Sey Thöndrub Tsering	mtsho sgo sras don grub tshe ring
Tsomönling Labrang	tshe smon gling bla brang
Tsöna	mtsho sna
tsondu	tshogs ‘du
tsondu gyendzom	tshogs ‘du rgyas ‘dzoms
tsondu hragdu	tshogs ‘du hrag bsdus
tsondu hragdu gyepa	tshogs ‘du hrag bsdus rgyas pa
tsondzin	‘tsho ‘dzin
Tsongjö	tshogs mchod
Tsuglagang	gtsug lag khang
Tsultrim Nyima	tshul khrims nyi ma
Ü	dbus
ula	‘ul lag
Urgyen Tsering	o rgyan tshe ring
Ütsang	dbus gtsang
Wangchuk Tsering	dbang phyug tshe ring
Wangden	dbang ldan
Wangden Tashi	dbang ldan bkra shis
Wangdü	dbang ‘dus
Wangye	dbang rgyal
Wangye Phüntso	dbang rgyal phun tshogs
Wölga Zingche	‘ol kha rdzing che
Wölkha Zingche	‘ol kha rdzing che
Wölkha Chunjug	‘ol kha chu ‘jug
Wölkha Chöling	‘ol kha chos gling
Wön	‘on
Wöse	‘od zer
Wuyug	‘u yug
Yaba	ya pa
Yabshi	yab gzhis
Yamdro	yar ‘brog
Yamdrotso	yar ‘brog mtsho
Yangbachen	yangs pa chen
Yangki	g.yang skyid
Yangpajen	yangs pa can
yangsane ta kha gagowre	g.yang sa nas rta kha bkag dgos red

yar	g.yar
Yarlung Phodrang	yar lung pho brang
Yarlungtsangpo	yar lung gtsang po
Yartö Dragla	yar stod brag la
yechog chemmo	g.yas phyogs chen po
Yeshe Lhündrup	ye shes lhun grub
Yeshe Thargye	ye shes dar rgyas
Yeshe Tsultrim	ye shes tshul khrims
yeru	g.yas ru
yeru magji	g.yas ru dmag spyi
Yigtsang	yig tshang
yogpo	g.yog po
yongdzin	yongs ‘dzin
Yönru	g.yon ru
Yönru magji	g.yon ru dmag spyi
Yügye Lhünpotse	g.yul rgyal lhun po rtse
Yünphug	yun phug
Yuthok	g.yu thog

APPENDIX B

Kashag's Edict from Lhüntse Dzong (26 March 1959)

From the Kashag in the palace of Yügyal Lhünpotse, on the day and month of Earth Hog Year.[1]

Tho don / bod gangs can gyi ljongs 'di mi lo stong phrag gi gong nas chos srsid gnyis ldan rgyal khab rang dbang rang btsan yongs grags kyang/ bar skabs rgya nag man ju gong ma dang mchod yon gyi 'brel ba'i rkyen gyis/ bod rgya nag gi khongs gtogs tsam yin khul rtsod bsnyad byung rung / bod rang dbang rang btsan gyi chos srid dbang lung dga' ldan pho brang chen po nas mdzad mus kyi

rgyal khab srung ba'i drag po'i dmag dpung dang / drag chas bzo bskrun / gser dngul zangs gsum gyi tram ka dang shog lor bcas mi dmangs tshang mas sprod len 'gro rgyugs / yig skyel kog shog la tri ka si sbyar ba / phyi rgyal dang thad kar 'brel gtugs sogs rgyal khab che chung gi dbye ba tsam ma gtogs 'dzam gling rang btsan rgyal khab khag dang 'dra ba'i rang btsan gyi che rtags mthun rkyen cha lag tshang ba zhig yod na 'ang/

spyi lo 1950 lo rgya dmar gung phran dang nas rang bshed kyis bod du drag po'i dmag dpung btang bar mi 'bor go lag gang ci nas ya lan ma 'phrod pas/ rgya bod dbar gros mthun don tshan bcu bdun 'khod pa bod gzhung la 'dri bsdur tsam med par/ rgya dmar gyi 'dod mos ltar dbang med bsnol 'jog byed dgos byung ba nas bzungs/ gong sa skyabs mgon chen po mchog dang bod gzhung dga' ldan pho brang chen po/ bod ser skya mi dmangs bcas nas ngo bstun 'gyod med gang yong ci zabs gnang rung

rgya dmar gzhung dang bod sdod rgya dmar dpon dmag nas gros mthun la mi gnas pa'i khams phyogs dgon khag rtsa bstor btang ba dang / lhag par chos dang bla ma/ dge 'dun la sdang dgra'i gtso bor bzungs ste mdor na ston pa thugs rje can sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das la yang log spyod par ngos 'dzin gyis log rtogs skur 'debs ngan smad tshod med kyis yong khyabs tshags par thog 'grems spel byas par brten

---

[1] This is the copy of the Kashag edict issued on 26 March 1959 that was given by Surkhang's former servant Kelsang Wangchug to Professor Goldstein on 18 August 2012. The translation is in chapter 14.

ston pa sang rgyas pa'i chos byed spyi dang / lhag par bod mi ser skya drag zhan tshang mas zhen pa gting nas mi log dbang med khar/ khrims 'gal btsan gnon mnar gcod gdug rtsub lo re nas lo re bzhin tshod med rgya cher btang ste bod mi'i srog las gces pa bstan pa rin po che de 'dzin dang bcas pa rtsa med shul lhag gtong rgyu dngos shugs nas ra 'phod la brten/

chos dang skad yig/ zas gos cha lugs kyis dbye ba'I bod ljong ser skya mi dmangs yongs rdzogs blo pham yid chad sdug bsngal khong khro mi bzod pa'i ngang du sdod skabs /nye char bod rab lo 933 zla 2 tshes 1 nyin bod ljongs chos srid gnyis kyi bdag po skyabs mgon ta la'i bla ma rin po che mchog dang / srid kyi 'khur 'dzin bka' shag gi mtshon dpon rigs bcas bod dmag khul khang du gzigs mor phebs dgos gdan zhu byas te/ gong sa chen po'i sku srung nas go mtshon 'khyer mi chog pa'i brda skyel byas pa nang don bsam ngan ji yod mi rtogs kyang / gnas skabs btsan shugs che chung gi rgya phyogs nas ci lab ma byas thabs bral lta bus/

gzigs mor phebs rgyu gtan 'khel mtshams/ gdan sa gsum gyi bla ma las ne dang/ dge 'dun dmangs/ gzhung zhabs ser skya /lha zhol khul du gnas pa'i ser skya mi dmangs khri khrag brgal ba'i gong sa skyabs mgon ta la'i bla ma mchog rgya mi'i dmag sgar nang gzigs mor phebs rgyu zhes pa da phan rgya dmag bod du 'byor nas lo brgyad ring ma byung ma srid pa'i gsar spros la dwogs gnas kyis nor gling pho brang gi gzim sgo'i 'gag tu ngu 'bod phyag 'tshal gyi gdong bkag zhus pa dang chab cig

rgya bod gnyis chos dang lam lugs gang ci tsha grang ya 'gal snod gcig tu sdod thabs med pa'I sems nad tshang ma dus gcig tu brdol te/ mi dmangs yongs rdzogs rgya 'og nas sger langs zin lugs dril bsgrags khrom skor bskyod pa sogs/ sger langs 'thab 'dzing gnas tshul 'ur langs chen po dngos su byung bar/ gong sa skyabs mgon chen po mchog nas rgya bod dkrog rkyen med pa'i lhing cha gang che yong thabs mi dmangs kyi 'thus mir legs cha'i bka' slob zab mo gang yong stsal rung

ser skya mi dmangs tshang ma'I snying nad sel thabs med pa nyan 'jog zhu min gyi drag chas spras pa'i dang blangs dmag mi khyon che pho brang yas mas dang gtsug lag khang bcas par mtha' skor srung 'doms byas te rgya bod 'brel lam glo bur zhig ral tshabs che gyur song yang/ da dung gong sa skyabs mgon chen po nas rgya bod mthun lam 'jam chag yong rgu'i thugs res/mthun lam thabs mkhas gang yong mdzad song rung

lha sdod rgya dmar dpon rigs nas mthun lam lag skyong med par drag gnon gtong rtsis kho nas drag po'i dmag gi gra sgrig rgya che dang 'brel / bod zla 2 pa'i tshes 8 nyin gung lha sa'i chu tshod 4 pa'i thog gong sa skyabs mgon chen po'i bzhugs gnas pho brang gi byang phyogs nas kha gtad de me sgyog gnyis 'phangs pa pho brang lcags ri'i phyi ngos su phu kru brgyad cu'i sar babs 'dug pa gas gtor ma byung ba ma gtogs gong sa chen po'i sku phyar 'gal rken nyen tshab ci che yong gzhi 'i gnas tshul thabs rdug dngos su byung bar brten

bod ljong ser skya mi dmangs tshang mas gong sa skyabs mgon chen po re zhig sku phya'i ngan g.yol du phyi rgyar gdan zhu bdgos rgyu zhu nan che ba lhag bsam gyi rgyu rkyen zhu 'bod dngos 'brel la song gshis/ de nub mtshan mo rang la glo bur du gong sa skyabs mgon chen po mchog dang / yongs 'dzin rnam gnyis/ chab srid kyi 'khur 'dzin bka' shag/ gzhan dag bcas zhabs 'bring nyung bsdus shig gsang phebs gnang dgos byung ba /

da cha lho kha khul zhabs sor 'khod rung / da lta zing 'khrug gi gnas skabs la song gshis/ spyi nor gong sa skyabs mgon chen po mchog bod sar lhod bzhugs mdzad rgyu chab srid kyi 'khur 'dzin ser skya dang bcas bod mi dmangs tshang mas blos bzod min thog/ bod dang bod chen po'i phan bde'i rtsa ba rgyal bstan chab srid dang skye 'gro yongs kyi 'phral phugs bde don rlabs che'i slad du/ phyi rgyal sa thog gang 'os su gdan zhu bya rgyu yin cing/

lha sas mtshon pa'i grong khyer re zung la rgya dmar gyi dpung dmag yod pa ma gtogs dbus gtsang bar gsum gyi chab srid dbang lung yongs rdzogs dga' ldan pho brang pa chen pos 'dzin mus thog/ da cha slar yang sger langs rang btsan gtsang ma'i lugs gnyis zung ldan gyi dga' ldan pa'i rgyal khab gsar du 'dzugs rgyu'i rgyal sa lhasa sa khul zing 'khrig la brten/ gnas skabs lhun po rtse'I pho brang du gtan 'bebs kyis srid tshab zur pa blo bzang bkra shis dang srid tshab zur pa bde mkhar ba gnyis la srid blon ngo ma bsko gzhag bkod rgya zur bsrings dang 'brel

rab lo 933 sa mo phag gi bod zla 2 pa'i tshes 17 res gza' phur bu gza' skar phun sum tshogs pa'i nyin/ bkra shis kyi sgo 'phar dang po dbye slad/ chos srsid bnyis kyi bdag po gong sa skyabs mgon rgyal ba'i dbang po mchog nas rgyal bstan dar zhing 'gro kun bde ba dang/ khyad par bod ljongs ser skya mi dmangs tshang ma bde skyid rdzogs ldan gyi dpal la rtag tu longs su spyod pa'i thugs smon bden tshig bk'a drin bskyangs par/ ser skya mi drag mi dmangs yongs rdzogs dga' mgu wi rangs tshad med kyis bkra shis dar 'phyar dang dga' ston rgya che bgyis song zhing /

khyod rang nas kyang da cha dga' ldan pho brang pa zhes rang btsan rgyal khab gsar 'dzugs grub pa'i gtam snyan bkod rgya 'di bzhin mig lam du son 'phral/ sa khul ser skya mi dmangs yongs rdzongs la ma do ma thos med pa'I dril bsgrags dang 'brel ba'i pho mo tshang mas gzab mchor dang bkra shis pa'i dar 'phyar ba dang/ lha sde rnams nas bkra shis gso sbyong dang dkon mchog gi rten la mchod 'bul / mi sde rnams nas bsangs gsol dang rkang bro glu gzhas sogs rang dbang lag tu lon par rten 'brel gzab rgyas dgos rgyu dang/

da phyin gzhung sger gyi las don zhu 'os ci mchis 'di ga g.yul rgyal lhun po'i rgyal sar zhus te bkod don la brtsi bkur dang len sogs /bod ljongs bstan pa spyi don gyi 'phral phugs bde don la bsam shes 'dzol med dgos rgu ma zad/ da nas rang dbang chos 'byor bde skyid rdzogs ldan gsar pa'i dga' don la ci dgar longs su spyod chog pa bcas / de don yid 'doms gyis g.yul rgyal lhun po rtse pho brang bka' shag nas/ sa phag zla tshes la.

REFERENCES

Alo Chöndze, ed. 1958. *The Political Testament and Warning by H. H. the 13th Dalai Lama to His People in 1932 and an Advice by H. H. The 14th Dalai Lama to His People in 1955* (in Tibetan). Kalimpong: Tibet Mirror Press.

Andrugtsang, Gompo Tashi. 1973. *Four Rivers, Six Ranges: Reminiscences of the Resistance Movement in Tibet.* Dharamsala, India: Information and Publicity Office.

A thar Nor bu (Athar). 2004. *Bstan srung dang blangs dpa' bo li thang a thar nor bu'i mi tshe lo rgyus.* [The autobiography of the volunteer resistance force hero Athar Norbu]. India: privately published.

Barnett, Robert and Shiren Akiner, eds. 1994. *Resistance and Reform in Tibet.* London: Hurst and Company.

Ba ri, Zla ba tshe ring. 2007. *Zungs khrag dron mo gangs can ljongs su mchod* [An offering of warm blood to the land of the snows], vol. 1. Dharamsala: Central Tibetan Administration.

Bar zhi rje drung (Barshi Jedrung), Ngag dbang bstan skyong. 2004. *Mi tshe'i lo rgyus dngos byung bden pa'i rang sgra nyams myong rna rgyan yid kyi bcud len* [My biography, which is a natural sound of truth and the experiences are like an earring which is full of mental nourishment], Oral History Series 20. Dharamsala: Bod kyi dpe mdzod khang [Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA)].

Bar zhi rtse mgron (Barshi Tsendrön), Ngag dbang bstan skyong. n.d. Lecture on the "1959 Lhasa Uprising," given to students at the Mentsikang, Dharamsala, India. Transcription from the lecture tape by Wangdue Tsering of the Oral History Department of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. Unpublished manuscript.

Benshu bianweihui [Biography committee for this book]. 2011. *Wang feng zhuan* [The biography of Wang Feng]. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe [Chinese Communist Party History Publishing House].

Bka zur Kun bde gling, Od zer rgyan mtshan (Kundeling). 2000. *Mi tshe'i lo rgyus las 'phrol pa'i gtam thabs byus snying stobs kyi 'bras bu* [A life story which is the result of the essence of strategy and enthusiasm], vol. 1. Mysore, India: self-published.

Blo Tshe [Lotse]. 1965. *Li thang khul gyi lo rgyus.* [The history of Litang]. Unpublished manuscript.

———. 2001. *Bod chol kha gsum gyi ya gyal mdo khams sgang drug gi nang tshan li thang spo 'bor ra ba sgang du khe shing tsher lon jon ye bstan blo tshe nas so sos rgyal khab kyi don du shabs 'degs zhus pa'i mi tshe'i lo rgyus tshans pa'i thig shing bzhungs so* [The autobiography of Lotse who grew up in Litang in Kham, which is one of the three regions of Tibet, and served the nation]. Darjeeling: Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Center Printing Department.

Bod rang skyong ljongs chab gros rig gnas lo rygus dpyad gzhi'i rygu cha zhib 'jug u yon lhan khang [Tibet Autonomous Region Political Consultative Conference's Historical and Cultural Materials Research Committee; CHMO], ed. *Bod kyi rig gnas lo rgyus dpyad gzhi'i rgyu cha cha bdams bsgrigs pa* [Collection of Tibetan cultural and historical materials], vols. 1–25. Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang [Tibet People's Publishing House].

Buck, Stuart H. 1969. *Tibetan-English Dictionary with Supplement.* Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press.

Cai, Wenqing. 2012. *Xi ma la ya feng yun* [Winds and clouds on the Himalayas]. Beijing: Huawen chubanshe [Sino-Cultural Press].

Chab spel, Tshe bstan phun tshogs. 1994. "Ngas zur khang gi 'gag pa byed skabs sger zur khang pa dang/ zur khang dbang chen dge legs kyi lo rgyus rags rim mthong thos byung rigs 'ga zhig" [Some of what I saw and heard about Surkhang Wangchen Gelek when I was doing the job of (Kashag) "bodyguard" for him]. In CHMO, 79–104.

Che Minghuai and Zhang Huachuan. 2009. *Zhang Jingwu: The Representative of the Central People's Government in Tibet.* Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe [China Tibetology Publishing House].

Chen Bing. 1989. "Panguo biwang" [People committing treason are doomed to die]. In *Xizang geming huiyilu—jinian xizang shixing minzhu gaige sanshi zhounian zhuanji (disiji)* [Memoirs of the Tibetan revolution, vol. 4], 18–31. Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe [Tibet People's Publishing House].

Chen Bing. 2007. "Zangjun shilue" [A brief history of the Tibetan army]. In *Xizang wenshi ziliao xuanji* [Collection of Tibetan cultural and historical materials], 363–70. Beijing: Minzu chubanshe [Publishing House of Minority Nationalities].

CHMO. *See* Bod rang skyong ljongs chab gros rig gnas lo rygus dpyad gzhi'i rygu cha zhib 'jug u yon lhan khang.

Chen, Qingying. 2003. *Tibetan History.* Beijing: China Intercontinental Press.

Chen Jian. 2006. "The Tibetan Rebellion of 1959 and China's Changing Relations with India and the Soviet Union." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8 (3): 54–101.

Chen Yi zhuan bianxie zu. [Chen Yi's Biography Collection Team], eds. 1991. *Chen Yi Zhuan.* [Biography of Chen Yi]. Beijing: Dangdai zhongguo chubanshe [Chinese Communist Party's Publishing House].

Chu sgang lo rgyus rtsom sgrigs tshogs chung [Chushigandru History Editorial Committee], eds. 2000. *Chu sgang lo rgyus* [The history of Chushigandru], vol. 1. Delhi: Welfare Society of Central Dokham Chushi Gangdrug.

Conboy, Kenneth and James Morrison. 2002. *The CIA's Secret War in Tibet.* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Cooper, Tom. 2008. "Tibet, 1950–1974." *ACIG (Air Combat Information Group) Journal*, 10 February 2008.

Dalai Lama. (1962) 1977. *My Land and My People.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson. Reprint, New York: Potala Publishers. Citations refer to the 1977 edition.

———.1990. *Freedom in Exile: The Autobiography of the Dalai Lama.* New York: Harper Collins.

Dangdai zhongguo congshu bianjibu. [Modern China Editorial Department], ed. 1991. *Dangdai zhongguo de Xizang* [Contemporary China's Tibet]. Beijing: Dangdai zhongguo chubanshe [Chinese Communist Party Publishing House].

Dawa Cairen [see also Ba ri, Zla ba tshe ring]. *Xieji xueyu: Xizang hujiao jiuguo kang zhan shi* [An offering of blood as a sacrifice for the land of the snows]. http://www.xizang-zhiye.org/b5/arch/books/xueji/index.html (accessed 10 March 2018).

Deng Shaodong. 1985. "Lasa pingpan zhandou de jingguo" [The process of putting down the rebellion in Lhasa]. In *Xizang dangshi tongxun* [A periodical on party history in Tibet], 6 & 7 (1): 37–45.

Dge rgyas pa, Bstan 'dzin rdo rje (Gyegyepa, Tenzin Dorje). 1990. "Kha bral ring lugs pas lha sar drag po'i ngo log zing 'khrug dngos su bslangs pa'i gnas tshul 'ga' zhig" [Some information on the 1959 revolt by separatists]. In CHMO, 12: 133–41.

DIIR (Department of Information and International Relations, Tibetan Government in Exile). 1993. *Tibet: Proving Truth from Facts.* Dharamsala: DIIR.

DPRC. (Documents from the People's Republic of China) [*Dui Xizang gongzuo de zhongyao zhishi*] [Important instructions on the work in Tibet]. Professor Goldstein's collection of Chinese government documents, housed in Case Western Reserve University's Center for Research on Tibet.

Dunham, Mikel. 2004. *Buddha's Warriors: The Story of the CIA-backed Tibetan Freedom Fighters, the Chinese Invasion, and the Ultimate Fall of Tibet.* New York: Tarchen/Penguin.

Dutt, S. 1977. *With Nehru in the Foreign Office.* Calcutta: Minerva Associates.

Fan Ming. 1987. *Ba wuxing hongqi gaogao di chazai ximalayashan shang: huiyi zhonggong xibei xizang gongwei (shiba jun duli zhidui) jin jun xizang* [Erecting the five-star national flag on the top of the Himalayan Mountains: A memoir of the entrance into Tibet by the Tibetan Working Committee of the Northwest Bureau of the CCP (the Independent Detachment of the Eighteenth Army)]. Draft manuscript in the private collection of the author, 150 pp.

———. 2009. *Xizang neibu zhizheng* [The internal warfare in Tibet]. New York: Mingjing chubanshe [Mirror Books].

———. 2016. *Ba wuxing hongqi gaogaode chazai ximalayashan shang.* [Erecting the five-star national flag on the top of the Himalayan Mountains]. Haikou: Nanhai chuban gongsi [Nanhai Publishing Company].

———. 2017. *Fan Ming huiyilu* [Memoirs of Fan Ming]. Xi'an: Shanxi renmin chubanshe [Shanxi People's Publishing House].

Goldstein, Melvyn C. 1968. "An Anthropological Study of the Tibetan Political System." PhD dissertation, University of Washington.

———. 1971. "Serfdom and Mobility: An Examination of the Institution of 'Human Lease' in Traditional Tibetan Society." *Journal of Asian Studies* 30 (3): 521–34.

———. 1986. "Reexamining Choice, Dependency and Command in the Tibetan Social System: 'Tax Appendages' and other Landless Serfs." *The Tibet Journal* 11 (4): 79–113.

———. 1989. *A History of Modern Tibet: The Demise of the Lamaist State, 1913–1951*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

———. 1997. *The Snow Lion and the Dragon: China, Tibet, and the Dalai Lama*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

———. 1998. "The Dalai Lama's Dilemma." *Foreign Affairs,* January/February, 83–97.

———, ed. 2001. *The New Tibetan-English Dictionary of Modern Tibetan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

———. 2006. "The United States, Tibet, and the Cold War." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8 (3): 145–64.

———. 2007. *A History of Modern Tibet*. Vol. 2, *The Calm before the Storm, 1951–1955*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

———. 2009. "Bouddhisme tibétain et monachisme de masse" In *Des moines et des moniales dans le monde. La vie monastique de la parente,* edited by Adeline Herrou and Gisele Krauskopff (Toulouse, France: Presses Universitaires du Mirail). (The original English version of this paper, "Tibetan Buddhism and Mass Monasticism" can be found at the website of the Center for Research on Tibet, Case Western Reserve University, http://www.case.edu/affil/tibet/documents/Tibetan_Buddhism_and_Mass_Monasticism.pdf).

———. 2014. *A History of Modern Tibet* Vol. 3, *The Storm Clouds Descend, 1955–1957*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Goldstein, Melvyn C., Dawa Sherap, William Siebenschuh. 2004. *A Tibetan Revolutionary: The Political Life and Times of Bapa Phuntsog Wangye*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Goldstein, Melvyn C. and Matthew Kapstein, eds. 1998. *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and National Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Goodman, Michael H. 1986. *The Last Dalai Lama: A Biography.* Boston: Shambala Books.

Gopal, Sarvepalli. 1984. *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, vol. 3. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Guillermaz, Jacques. 1976. *The Chinese Communist Party in Power, 1949–1976*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Harrell, Steven. 1993. "Introduction: Civilizing Projects and the Reaction to Them." In*Chinese Families in the Post-Mao Era,* edited by Deborah Davis and Steven Harrell. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hasan, Mushirul, ed. 2005. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru.* Second Series, Vol. 36 (1 December 1956–21 February 1957). New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund.

Hilton, Isabel. 1999. *The Search for the Panchen Lama.* New York: W. W. Norton.

Historynet Staff. 2006. "CIA's Secret War in Tibet." *Military History Magazine*, 12 June 2006. https://www.historynet.com/cias-secret-war-in-tibet.htm.

Holober, Frank. 1999. *Raiders of the China Coast: CIA Covert Operations during the Korean War.* Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press.

Huang Shaoyong. 1989. "Tieliu gungun danxin yiyi" [Vehicles like a rushing river and red minds shining like a fire]. In *Xizang geming huiyilu: Jinian xizang shixing minzhu gaige sanshi zhounian zhuanji (disiji)* [Memoirs of the Tibetan revolution], vol. 4, pp. 46 ff. Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe [Tibet People's Publishing House].

Ingram, Paul. 1990. *Tibet: The Facts; A Report Prepared by the Scientific Buddhist Association for the United Nations Commission on Human Rights*. Dharamsala: Young Buddhist Association.

Ji Youquan. 1993a. *Bai xue: jiefang xizang jishi.* [White snow: A record of actual events in the liberation of Tibet]. Beijing: Zhongguo wuzi chubanshe [China Materials Publishing House].

———. 1993b. *Xizang pingpan jishi—1959 nian panluan changpian jishi wenxue* [Putting down the rebellion in Tibet in 1959: A record of actual events in literary style]. Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe [Tibet People's Publishing House].

Jiangbian Jiacuo (Jambey Gyatso). 1989. *Banchan dashi* [The Great Master Panchen Lama]. Beijing: Dongfang chuanshe [The Eastern Publishing House].

———. 2004. *Li jue zhuan.* [The biography of Li Jue]. Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe [China Tibetology Publishing House].

———. 2008. *Mao zedong yu dalai banchan.* [Mao Zedong and the Dalai, Panchen] Hong Kong: Xindalu chubanshe [New World Press].

Jianguo yilai mao zedong wengao [Mao Zedong's manuscripts since the foundation of the PRC], vol. 8. 1993. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe [Central Committee Literature Press].

Kālacakra Calendar. http://www.kalacakra.org/calendar/tdata/TS_1956.TXT.

Knaus, Ken. 1999. *Orphans of the Cold War: America and the Tibetan Struggle for Survival.* New York: Public Affairs.

———. 2003. "Official Policies and Covert Programs: The U.S. State Department, the CIA and the Tibetan Resistance." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 5 (3): 54–79.

Kun bde gling. *See* Bka zur Kun bde gling, Od zer rgyan mtshan.

Laird, Thomas. 2006. *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama.* New York: Grove Press.

Leeker, Joe F. 2006. "Missions to Tibet." First published on 29 May 2006, last updated on 10 January 2018, http://www.utdallas.edu/library/specialcollections/hac/cataam/Leeker/history/Tibet.pdf (accessed 20 February 2019).

Lha klu (Lhalu). 1993. "Yab gzhis lha klu'i khyim tshang gi lo rgyus skor" [About the history of the Lhalu Family]. In *CHMO,* 16: 1–322.

Li Jianglin. 2010. *1959 Lasa!: Dalai Lama ruhe chuzou* [1959 Lhasa: How the Dalai Lama fled]. Taipei: Lianjing chubanshe [Linking Publishing Company].

———. 2012. *Dang tieniao zai tiankong feixiang: 1956–1962 qingzang gaoyuan shang de mimi zhanzheng* [When the iron bird flies: The 1956–1962 secret war on the Tibetan plateau]. Taipei: Lianjing chubanshe [Linking Publishing Company].

———. 2016. *Tibet in Agony: Lhasa 1959*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Li Weihai. 1996. *Lishi de yiye: dalai panchen jinjing jishi* [A page in the book of history: the history of Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama going to Beijing]. Beijing: Zhongguo she hui chubanshe [China Society Printing House].

Liu Chongwen and Chen Shaochou, eds. 1996. "Meetings of the Political Bureau of Central Committee, March 17th to 20th, 1959." In *Liu Shaoqi nianpu: 1898–1969* [Liu Shaoqi's Chronicle: 1898–1969], vol. 2. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe [Central Party Literature Press]. Available on "News of the Communist Party of China," http://dangshi.people.com.cn/GB/151935/176588/176596/10556168.html (accessed 25 March 2017).

Liu Guangrun. 1989. "Changdu zhui fei ji." [Chasing the Rebels in Chamdo]. In *Xizang geming huiyilu –Jinian xizang shixing minzhu gaige sanshi zhounian zhuanji* [Memoirs of the Tibetan revolution], vol. 4, 55–64. Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe [Tibet People's Publishing House].

Mao Zedong. 1969. "Mao Zedong Sixiang wansui" [Long live the thoughts of Mao Zedong]. Beijing: publisher not identified.

Mao Zedong. 1977. *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, vol. 5. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

———. 1955. "On the Cooperative Transformation of Agriculture," 31 July 1955." In Mao Zedong, 1977, *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, vol. 5, 184–207. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

———. 1955. "The Debate on the Current Cooperative Transformation of Agriculture and Class Struggle, 11 October 1955." In Mao Zedong, 1977, *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, vol. 5, 211–26. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

———. 1956. "Speech at the Second Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, 15 November 1956." In Mao Zedong, 1977, *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, vol. 5, 346–47. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

McCarthy, Roger E. 1997. *Tears of the Lotus: Accounts of Tibetan Resistance to the Chinese Invasion, 1950–1962*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company.

McGranahan, Carole. 2010. *Arrested Histories: Tibet, the CIA, and Memories of a Forgotten War.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Mda' zur Li thang dbra phrug ngag dbang (Former Commander, Litang Radru Ngawang). 2008. *Mi tshe'i lo rgyus zol med srong po'i gtam gyi rol mo* [The pleasant story of the true life history of a person], vol. 1. Dharamsala: Amnye Machin Cultural Research Center's Publishing House.

Mukherjee Aditya and Mridula Mukherjee, eds. 2010. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, second series, vol. 41. New Delhi: Rekha Printers.

Mullin, C. 1976. "How the CIA Went to War in Tibet." *The Guardian,* 19 January 1976.

Ngapo [same as Ngabö and Nga phod], Ngawang Jigme. 1988. "The Truth about the March 10th Event of 1959." *Tibetology* 1, 3–4.

Nga phod, Ngag dbang 'jigs med (Ngabö, Ngawang Jigme). 1989. "Rang skyong ljongs kyi skabs lnga pa'i mi dmangs 'thus tshogs kyi tshogs 'du thengs gnyis pa'i thog gnang ba'i gal che'i gsung bshad." [Important speeches at the second session of the Fifth Tibet Autonomous Region's People's Congress]. In *Bod ljongs nyin re'i tshags par* [Tibet Daily Newspaper], 31 August 1989, 1–6.

Norbu, Dawa. 1979. "The 1959 Rebellion: An Interpretation." *China Quarterly* 77, 74–93.

———. 1997. "Tibet in Sino-Indian Relations: The Centrality of Marginality." *Asian Survey,* 37 (11): 1078–95.

Norbu, Jamyang. 1986. *Warriors of Tibet: The Story of Aten and the Khampas' Fight for the Freedom of their Country.* London: Wisdom Publications.

———. 1994. "The Tibetan Resistance Movement and the Role of the CIA." In*Resistance and Reform in Tibet*, edited by Robert Barnett and Shiren Akiner, 186–96. London: Hurst and Company.

———. 2007. *Shadow Tibet: Selected Writings 1989–2004*. India: Srishti Publishers & Distributors.

Norbulingka Institute Editorial Committee. 2009. *Lhar bcas 'gro ba'i 'dren mchog srid zhi'i gtsug rgyan spyi nor gong sa skyabs mgon rgyal ba'i dbang po thams cad mkhyen pa sku 'phreng rim* *byon gyi mdzad rnam rgya chen snying rje's rol mtsho rlabs 'phreng brgya ldan zhes bya ba bzhugs so* [Biography of the Dalai Lama], 6 vols. Dharamsala: Norbulingka Institute.

Palden Gyatso. 1997. *The Autobiography of a Tibetan Monk.* New York: Grove Press.

Pant, Apa. 1978. *Mandala: An Awakening.* Bombay: Orient Longman.

Phu pa Tsering Topgyal, ed. 2000. *Mdo khams chu bzhi sgang drug bstan srung dang blangs dmag gi lo rgyus.* [The history of Chushigandru and the Volunteer Army]. Dharamsala: Central Dhoto Chushi Gangdruk.

Prouty, L. Fletcher. 1973. *The Secret Team: The CIA and Its Allies in Control of the United States and the World.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Qi Xin. 2009. "Dingzhi budui de xizang pingpan zuozhan" [The battles of quelling the rebellion in Tibet by the troops of the Ding Headquarters]. In Ding Sheng, 2009, *Dingsheng jiangjun huiyilu* [The memoirs of General Ding Sheng], 216–25. Hong Kong: Thinker Publishing Ltd.

Richardson, Hugh E. 1984. *Tibet: and Its History.* Boulder, CO: Shambhala Press.

Rlung 'phrin gtong deb shes bya kun khyab dge [The book for sending telegrams]. 1949 Unpublished xylograph manuscript in the collection of Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala.

Rnam gling (Namseling), Dpal 'byor 'jigs med (Penjor Jigme). 1988. *Mi tshe'i lo rgyus dang 'brel yod sna tshogs* [My life history and other related things]. Dharamsala: Bod kyi dpe mdzod khang [Library of Tibetan Works and Archives].

Rta ra (Tara) bstan 'dzin chos nyid. 2005. *Rang nyid ngo sprod* [An introduction to myself]. Dharamsala: Bod kyi dpe mdzod khang [Library of Tibetan Works & Archives].

Sautman, Barry, 2006. "Demographic Assimilation and Tibet." In *Contemporary Tibet: Politics, Development and Society in a Disputed Region*, edited by Barry Sautman and June Dreyer, 230–57. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Sautman, Barry and June Dreyer, eds. 2006. *Contemporary Tibet: Politics, Development and Society in a Disputed Region.* Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Schram, Stuart. 1989. *The Thought of Mao Tse-tung.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

SCMP. *Survey of China Mainland Press.*

Sen, Chanakya. 1960. *Tibet Disappears.* London: Asia Publishing House.

Sexin, Luosang dunzhu [same as Sreg shing]. 2007. "Yuan Xizang jingweituan jingweiying de jianzhi he wo ren jingwei yingzhang shi fasheng panluan de qingkuang" [The organization of the previous Tibetan Bodyguard Regiment and regarding what happened during the rebellion when I was the Rupon of the Bodyguard Regiment]. In *Xizang wenshi ziliao xuanji* [Selected volumes of literary and historical documents of Tibet], edited by Xizang zizhiqu zhengxie wenshi ziliao bianjibu [Editorial department of the selected volumes of literary and historical documents of TAR political consultative conference], 78–83. Beijing: Minzu chubanshe [Publishing House of Minority Nationalities].

Shakabpa, Tsepon, W. D. (*See also* Zhwa sgab pa). 1967. *Tibet: A Political History.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Shakabpa, Tsepon Wangchuk Deden. 2010. *One Hundred Thousand Moons: An Advanced Political History of Tibet.* Leiden: Brill.

Shakabpa diary, handwritten manuscript in the private collection of the author and the Shakapba family.

Shakya, Tsering. 1999. *The Dragon in the Land of Snows.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Shan Chao. 1959. "Sunshine after Rain: From a Lhasa Diary." *Peking Review* 18 (May 5): 21–24.

Skal bzang dgra 'dul. 2001. *Mi tshe'i ring zhi drag sri zhu bsgrubs pa'i byung rim brjed byang* [A note on the series of military and peaceful activities I have done in my life]. Dharamsala: bod kyi dpe mdzod khang [Library of Tibetan Works & Archives].

Smith, Larry. 2008. Review of Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA, by Tim Weiner, Bahama Pundit, https://www.bahamapundit.com/2008/01/americas-cia-le.html.

Smith, Warren W. 1996. *Tibetan Nation: A History of Tibetan Nationalism and Sino-Tibetan Relations.* Boulder, CO: Westview.

Sreg shing, Blo bzang don grub. *See* Sexin, Luosang dunzhu.

Srid gros bod rang skyong ljongs u yon lhan khang lo rgyus ig gnas dpyad gzhis'i rgyu cha rtsom sgrigs pu'u [Historical and Cultural Materials Research Committee of the Political Consultative Conference of the Tibet Autonomous Region], ed. 2009. *Bod kyi lo rgyus rig gnas dpyad gzhi'i rgyu cha bdams bsgrigs* [Collection of Tibetan cultural and historical materials], vol. 4. Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang [Sichuan People's Publishing House]. This is the Sichuan edition of CHMO.

Stag lha (Taklha), Phun tshogs bkris (Phüntso Tashi). 1995. *Mi tshe'i byung ba brjod pa* [About the events in my life], vol. 2. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.

Ta la'i bla ma (Dalai Lama). 1963. *Ngos kyi yul dang mi mang* [My land and my people]. Darjeeling: Freedom Press.

Tambiah, Stanley. 1976. *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Religion and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background.* West Nyack, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Thomas, Evan. 1995. *The Very Best Men: Four Who Dared; The Early Years of the CIA.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Tibetan Calendar Converter. http://www.phlonx.com/resources/tibetan_calendar/.

Tenpa Soepa (Temba Söpa). 2008. *Twenty Years of My Life in China's Death Camp.* Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse.

Tsarong, Dundul Namgyal. 2000. *In the Service of His Country: The Biography of Dasang Damdul Tsarong, Commander General of Tibet.* Utica, New York: Snow Lion Press.

Tsarong, Paljor. n.d. *Lord of the High Mountains: The Life and Times of George Tsarong.* Unpublished manuscript.

Tsai, Wen-Hsuan and Xingmiu Liao. 2018. "The Authority, Functions, and Political Intrigues of the General Office of the Chinese Communist Party." *China Journal* 80, 46–67.

Tshe ring don dgrub, ed. 1989. *Gsar brje'i dran tho* [Revolutionary notes]. Lhasa: Bod ljongs shin hwa dpe deb khang [Tibet Xinhua Publishing House].

Tsering Topgyal. 2000. "The birth of nationalism and the 'death' of national government: The tragic irony of the 1959 Tibetan Uprising against Chinese occupation," Part II. *Tibetan Review* (April): 19–23.

———. 2003. "The birth of nationalism and the 'death' of national government: The tragic irony of the 1959 Tibetan Uprising against Chinese occupation," Part III. *Tibetan Review* (May): 19–24.

Tsong kha, Lha mo tshe ring (Lhamo Tsering). 1992. *Btsan rgol rgyal skyob* [Fight oppression, defend the nation], vol. 1. Dharamsala: Amnye Machen Cultural Research Center.

———. 1998. *Btsan rgol rgyal skyob.* [Fight oppression, defend the nation], vol. 2. Dharamsala: Amnye Machen Cultural Research Center.

Tubten Khetsun. 2008. *Memories of Life in Lhasa under Chinese Rule.* New York: Columbia University Press.

U.S. State Department. 1995. Foreign Relations of the United States. Washington, D.C.: U.S. National Archives.

Vidal, Christine. 2016. "The 1957–58 Anti-Rightist Campaign in China: History and Memory (1978–2014)." http://cecmc.ehess.fr/index.php?2861 (accessed 10 February 2018).

Wang, Furen and Wenqing Suo, 1984. *Highlights of Tibetan History.* Beijing: New World Press.

Wang Guozhen. 1989. "Pili tianjiang cheng xiongwan—huiyi lasa zhanyizhong de paobing xingdong" [The thunderbolt descended from the sky to punish the ferocious and the incorrigible (enemies)—recalling the artillery action during the Lhasa battle]. In *Xizang geming huiyilu –jinian xizang shixing minzhu gaige sanshi zhounian zhuanji (disiji).* [Memoirs of the Tibetan revolution], vol. 4, 38–45. Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe [Tibet People's Publishing House].

Wang Gui. 1995. *Xizang lishi diwei bian* ["Discerning the nuances of the historical status of Tibet"]. Minzu chubanshe [Publishing House of Minority Nationalities].

———. 2003. "Xizang panluan shimo" [The complete story of the rebellion in Tibet]. In *Jian zheng bainian Xizang* [Eyewitnesses to 100 years of Tibet], edited by Zhang Xiaoming, 182–94. Beijing: Wuzhou chuanbo chubanshe [China Intercontinental Press].

Wang Zhongxing and Liu Liqin, eds. 2003. *Guofang Lishi (xia)* [History of National Defense, vol. 2]. Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe [Military Science Publishing House].

Wangyal, Phuntsok. 1974. "The Revolt of 1959." *Tibetan Review,* July-August, 74–93.

Warikoo, K., ed. 2009. Himalayan Frontiers of India: Historical, Geo-political and Strategic Perspectives. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge Contemporary South Asia Series.

Wei, Dedong. 2010. "Experiencing 'Tibetan Buddhism Marching East.'" http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_3d25d0c90100jrf9.html (accessed 2 May 2018).

Weiner, Benno Ryan. 2012. "The Chinese Revolution on the Tibetan Frontier: State Building, National Integration and Socialist Transformation, Zeku (Tsékhok) County, 1953–1958." PhD dissertation, Columbia University.

Weiner, Tim. 2007. *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA.* New York: Doubleday.

Weissman, Steve. 1973. "Last Tangle in Tibet." *Pacific Research and World Empire Telegram* 4 (5): 1–18.

Welfare Society of Central Dhokham Chushi Gangdrug. 1998. *Brief Introduction of Chushi Gangdrug Defend Tibet Volunteer Force and Welfare Society of Central Dhokham Chushi Gangdrug of Tibet.* Delhi: Welfare Society of Central Dhokham Chushi Gangdrug.

Wen Feng. 2009. "Tan guansan jiangjun zhihui lasa pingpan shimo" [The complete story of how General Tan Guansan put down the rebellion]. In *Wenshi jinghua* [Literature and history collection] 228 (May): 4–13.

Willner, Albert. 1995. "The Eisenhower Administration and Tibet, 1953–1961: Influence and the Making of U.S. Foreign Policy." PhD dissertation, University of Virginia.

Wu, Lengxi. 1995. *Yi mao zhuxi—wo qinshen jingli de ruogan zhongda lishi shijian pianduan.* [Remembering Chairman Mao—Reminiscences of the several significant historical events I have personally experienced]. Beijing: Xinhua Publishing House.

Wylie, Turrell V. 1959. "A Standard System of Tibetan Transcription." *Journal of Asiatic Studies* 22: 261–67.

Xizang geming huiyilu –jinian xizang shixing minzhu gaige sanshi zhounian zhuanji. [Memoirs of the Tibetan revolution], vol. 4. 1989. Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe [Tibet People's Publishing House].

Xizang junqu zhengzhibu [Tibet Military District's Political Department], ed. 1991. *Shijie wuji fengyunlu* [Wind and clouds on the roof of the world]. PLA's Literary Publishing Corps, 3 vols.

Xizang zizhiqu dangshi bangongshi [TAR Party History Office], ed. 1998. *Zhou enlai yu xizang* [Zhou Enlai and Tibet]. Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe [China Tibetology Publishing House].

Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuan hui and Xizang junqu dangshi ziliao zhengji lingdao xiaozu bian [Tibet Autonomous Region Party History Document Collection Committee and Tibet Military Region Party History Document Collection Leadership Team], eds. 1995. *Pingxi xizang panluan* [Putting down the revolt in Tibet]. Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe [Tibet People's Publishing House].

Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui [TAR Party History Materials Collection Committee], ed. 1995. *Xizang de Minzu Gaige* [Democratic reforms in Tibet]. Chengdu: Xizang renmin chubanshe [Tibet People's Publishing House].

Yang dbyi kran. 1986. "Bod dmag khul khang thog mar 'dzugs skabs dang 'mi dmangs tshogs 'du' zer ba rdzus mar 'thabs rtsod byas pa'i gnas tshul." [On the founding of the Tibet Military Headquarters and the struggle against the fake "People's Association"] In CHMO, 9: 58–85.

———. 2009. "Bod dmag khul khang thog mar 'dzugs skabs dang "mi dmangs tshogs 'du" zer ba rdzus mar 'thab rtsod byas pa'i gnas tshul" [On the initial founding of the Tibet Military Headquarters and the struggle against the fake People's Association]. In *Bod kyi lo rgyus rig gnas dpyad gzhi'i rgyu cha bdams bsgrigs* [Collection of Tibetan cultural and historical materials], vol. 4, edited by Srid gros bod rang skyong ljongs u yon lhan khang lo rgyus gi gnas dpyad gzhis'i rgyu cha rtsom sgrigs pu'u [Political Consultative Conference of the Tibet Autonomous Region's Historical and Cultural Materials Research Committee], 67–87. Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang [Sichuan People's Publishing House].

Yang Fujing. 2014. "1959 nian zhiqian xizang jubu panluan zongshu" [An overview of the local rebels in Tibet before 1959]. In *Heping jiefang xizang yu zhixing xieyi de lishi jilu, xia* [History of the peaceful liberation of Tibet and agreement enforcement], edited by Zhonggong xizang zizhiqu weiyuanhui dangshi yanjiu shi [Editorial Research Office of CCP Party History of CCP Party Committee of TAR]. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe [Chinese Communist Party's History Publishing House].

Yang Shankun. 2001. *Yang Shangkun Riji* [Yang Shangkun's diary], vol. 1. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe [Central Party Literature Press].

Yang Yizhen. 2010. "Pingxi 1959 nian Xizang wu zhuang panluan ji shi: Yang yizhen hui yi lu," [Documentary on defeating the 1959 Tibetan armed rebellion—Yang Yizhen's memoirs]. In *Xizang wen shi zi liao xuan ji* [Selected works of Tibetan literature and history], no. 26, edited by Xizang zizhiqu zheng xie wen shi zi liao xue xi wei yuan hui bian [Tibet Autonomous Region CPPCC Data Learning Committee]. Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe [China Tibetology Publishing House].

Yu Ruxin, ed. 2011. *Ding sheng jiangjun huiyilu* [Memoir of General Ding Sheng]. Hong Kong: Xin shiji chuban ji chuanmei youxian gongsi [New Century Press].

Zhang Dingyi. 2005. *1954 nian dalai banchan jinjing jilue: jian ji xizang zizhiqu choubei weiyuanhui chengli.* [The record of the Dalai and the Panchen's visit to Beijing in 1954 and the founding of the Preparatory Committee for the TAR]. Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe [China Tibetology Publishing House].

Zhang, Guohua. 1983. "Jun bco brgyad pa bod skyod kyi gnas tshul ngo ma bkod pa" [A firsthand account of the advance into Tibet of the 18th Army]. In CHMO, 2: 180–223.

Zhang Xiangming. n.d. *Zhang xiangming: 55 nian xizang gongzuo shilu* [Zhang Xiangming: fifty-five years of work in Tibet]. Unpublished manuscript.

Zhao Junwen. 1989. "Bei baowei de qishisi tian" [The seventy-four days of being encircled]. In *Xizang geming huiyilu: jinian xizang shixing minzhu gaige sanshi zhounian zhuanji* [Memoirs of the Tibetan revolution: In memory of the democratic reforms in Tibet on its thirtieth anniversary], vol. 4. Beijing: Xizang renmin chubanshe [Tibet People's Publishing House].

———. 2014. "Shannan baowei zhan qishisi tian" [The seventy-four-day battle of defending Lhoka]. In *Heping jiefang xizang yu zhixing xieyi de lishi jilu, xia* [History of peaceful liberation of Tibet and the agreement's enforcement], vol. 2, edited by Zhonggong xizang zizhiqu weiyuanhui dangshi yanjiu shi [Research Office of the CCP Party History of the CCP Party Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region]. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe [Chinese Communist Party's History Publishing House].

Zhao Shenying, ed. 1995. *Zhonggong xizang dangshi dashiji (1949–94)* [Chronology of major events in the history of the CCP in Tibet (1949–94)]. Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe [Tibetan People's Publishing House].

Zhao Shenying. 1995. *Zhongyang zhuzang daibiao—Zhang Jingwu* [The Central Committee's Representative to Tibet—Zhang Jingwu]. Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe [Tibetan People's Publishing House].

———. 1998. *Zhang Guohua jiangjun zai Xizang* [General Zhang Guohua in Tibet]. Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe [China Tibetology Publishing House].

Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu dangshi ziliao zhengji weiyuanhui [Committee for collecting documents on the history of the CCP in the TAR], ed. 1990. *Zhonggong xizang dangshi dashiji (1949–66)* [Chronology of major events in the history of the CCP in Tibet (1949–66)]. Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe [Tibet People's Publishing House].

Zhonggong Xizang dangshi dashiji bianweihui [Editorial Committee for Collecting Documents on the Major Events of the CCP in the TAR], ed. 1995. *Zhonggong xizang dangshi dashiji (1949–94)* [Chronology of major events in the history of the CCP in Tibet (1949–94)]. Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe [Tibetan People's Publishing House].

Zhonggong xizang zizhiqu weiyuanhui [Chinese Communist Party's Tibet Autonomous Region Committee], ed. 1998. *Huiyi deng Xiaoping* [In memory of Deng Xiaoping]. Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian chubanshe [Chinese Communist Party's Literature Press].

———. 2014. *Heping Jiefang Xizang yu zhixing xieyi de lishi jilu (Xia)* [History of the peaceful liberation of Tibet and the implementation of the agreement, vol. 2]. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe [Chinese Communist Party's History Publishing House].

Zhonggong xizang zizhiqu weiyuanhui dangshi yanjiushi. [CCP Tibet Autonomous Region Committee Party History Research Office], ed. 2011. "Tan Guansan's self-criticism of 23 March 1959." In *Tan Guansan yu Lao Xizang Jingshen* [Tan Guansan and the old Tibet spirit], 248–49. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe [Chinese Communist Party History Publishing House].

———. 2011. *Tan guansan yu lao xizang jingshen* [Tan Guansan and the old Tibet spirit]. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe [Chinese Communist Party's History Publishing House].

Zhongguo zangxue yanjiu zhongxin keyan chu zhuban [China Tibetology Research Center, Science Research Department], ed. 1993. "Mao zedong zang minzu wengao" [Documents by Mao on the Tibetan nationality]." Beijing: mimeographed manuscript.

Zhonggong Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu weiyuanhui, Zhongguo Zangxue yanjiu zhongxin [The Literature Research Office of the Central Committee of the CCP, The Tibetan Autonomous Region Committee, and the China Tibet Research Center], eds., 2001. *Mao Zedong Xizang Gongzuo Wenxuan* [The selected works of Mao Zedong on Tibetan work]. Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian chubanshe [Central Party Literature Press], Zhongguo Zangxue chubanshe [China Tibetology Publishing House].

Zhonggong Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi; Zhonggong Xizang zizhiqu weiyuanhui [Central Committee Documents Research Office, Tibet Autonomous Region Committee], eds. 2005. *Xizang Gongzuo Wenxian Xuanbian (1949–2005)* [Selected collection of documents on work in Tibet; 1949–2005]. Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe [Central Party Literature Press].

Zhongguo zangxue yanjiu zhongxin keyan chu zhuban [The Research Department of China Tibetology Research Institute], eds. 1993. *Mao Zedong zang minzu wengao* [Mao Zedong on the Tibetan nationality]. Unpublished manuscript.

Zhwa sgab pa (Shakabpa), Dbang phyug bde ldan. 1976. *Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs* [Political history of Tibet], vol. 2. Kalimpong: Shakabpa House.

Zong Zidu. 1989. "Niliu fangun de rizi—yijiu wujiu nian sanyue shiri caifang jianwen" [During the days when countercurrents surged—information based on the interview on March 10th, 1959]. In *Xizang geming huiyilu—jinian xizang shixing minzhu gaige sanshi zhounian zhuanji* [Memoirs of the Tibetan revolution], vol. 4, 123–32. Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe [Tibetan People Publishing House].

Zongcanmoubu zhuangjiabing bianjibu [The Editorial Department of the Armored Forces of the People's Liberation Army General Staff Department], eds. 1990. *Dangdai zhongguo zhuangjiabing* [Contemporary Chinese armor]. Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe [People's Liberation Army Publishing House].

INDEX

NOTE: Page numbers *in italics* indicate illustrations. Translations in parentheses are Tibetan, unless specified to be Chinese (Ch.).

abbreviations, list of, xxiii–xxv
Abo Rapgye, 173
acculturation, inverted, 2n2
Afghanistan, 272, 492
airports: construction of, 27, 36, 73, 287n45, 330, 419; Damshung, 173, 325, 480; lack of, 22
Alo Chöndze, xix, xxvii, 66, 75, 76, 94, 351
Alo Dawa, 296, 297, 298
amban, xxvii
Amdo, xiv, xv. *See also* Qinghai Province
Amdo Gyetong, 256–57
Amdo Jimpa Gyatso, 137
Amdo Legshey, 298
Amdo Nyingpo, 123
Amdowas, xxvii, 76, 124, 213, 394, 450; and Chushigandru, 78, 119, 308
Andru Jinda. *See* Gombo Tashi
Andru Lobsang, 274
Andrutsang (Andru), xxvii, 57n86. *See also* Gombo Tashi
Angula, 63
anti-Chinese resistance: Chinese assumption of foreign involvement in, 151, 152, 153, 413, 463; and closure of Tibetan language school (for Chinese cadres), 32; Dalai Lama requested by Chinese to put an end to, 31, 153–54, 223; dual strategy of Dalai Lama and, 64–65, 117–18, 120, 153, 243–45, 491–92, 494–95; in ethnographic Tibet (*see* Chushigandru; Sichuan Province); fear of, and TWC opposition to Mao's gradualist policy, 33–34; forced reforms and uprising in Sichuan (*see* Sichuan Province—uprisings against forced democratic reforms); and forced reforms in Chamdo, 38, 68; India pressured to put an end to, 152, 215; pan-Tibet insurgency strategy, 95–97, 103, 110, 133, 135; picnics as device for meeting together, 247n5; protests of Dalai Lama's visit to Beijing (1954), 34–35; religious activities as device for meeting together, 75–77, 92; secret Tibetan army mission to recruit and train local Tibetan militias, 306–8, 392–94, 420–22; viewed as poorly planned and unrealistic by "worldly" Tibetans, 313–14. *See also* Chushigandru; independence of Tibet; Jenkhentsisum (JKTS); Lhasa Uprising; People's Association; Phala, Thubden Wönden—covert anti-Chinese activities of; Sitsab (acting prime ministers)
—UNDERESTIMATING THE DIFFICULTY OF DEFEATING CHINA MILITARILY: overview, 49–50; Dalai Lama wariness of, 120, 361; and discussion of taking control of Yadong, 49–50; and hopes for outside intervention,

anti-Chinese resistance *(continued)*
50, 444; and lack of Tibetan battle plan, 454–55; Nehru's caution against, 42, 43, 64, 268, 361; Ngabö's warning about, 390; and request for weapons and training from the U.S., 47, 49
Anti-Rightist Campaign (Mao Zedung): overview, 181–82; among other factors weakening the PLA, 157; and arrest and deportation of Blue Chinese from Tibet, 121–22; Fan Ming as initially running, 205; and Fan Ming, fall of, 181, 182, 205–11
Apa Pant, xxvii, 66n105, 267
aptru, 248n16
aristocracy, hereditary: as lay officials, 10; monk officials from, 11, 13; number of families in, 10; schooling of children in English schools, 21; sharing power equally with monk officials, 9–10. *See also* manorial estate system
artillery attack (PLA regiment at Trip): advice from Ngabö to report the position of Dalai Lama within Norbulinga to remain safe from, 424; alternatives that could have been taken but weren't, 456; and Battle for Lhasa, 448, 449–50, 456; belief that the Chinese were about to shell Norbulinga, 423–27, 429, 430–31, 435, 475; Chinese defector's information on taking out the regiment, as ignored, 131–32; Norbulinga as easily reached by, 427n52; secrecy continuing after the Dalai Lama's escape, and heavy casualties at Norbulinga, 441–42, 456; unauthorized shelling near Norbulinga and the decision to go into exile, 430–31, 459, 475
Asian Buddhists, CIA hope for, 147
assemblies (tsondu) (National Assemblies), 18–19, 30n21, 226n37; Barshi's unauthorized meeting of, 231–36, 343, 369; convened to discuss the issue of mobilizing the Tibetan Army against Chushigandru, 225–31, 242, 343. *See also* assemblies, emergency meetings in response to 10 March demonstration
assemblies, emergency meetings in response to 10 March demonstration: 10 March assembly, 375–84; 11 March assembly, 387–88; 12 March and following (Shöl abbreviated assembly), 389, 390–92; as attempted co-optation of the mimang, 375, 415, 416; dissolution of, false Dalai Lama claim to have ordered, 396–97; escape of the Dalai Lama and continued meetings of, 441; fighting vs. talking with the Chinese, no consensus on, 376–77, 379, 387–88, 391–92, 400; grievances of mimang and, 375–76; mimang representatives chosen for, 375; money distributed from Tibetan Mint for, 399; moving the location to Shöl Parkhang, 388–89; secrecy measures, 390–91; structure and participants of meetings, 375, 390; TWC report on, 403
—DECISIONS MADE: Command Center (*see* Command Center at Norbulinga); independence of Tibet, call for, 399–400, 403, 409, 427–28, 444; loyalty oath of participants in, 382–83, 390, 403; mimang guard force for Norbulinga, 379–80, 403
Athar (Litang Athar), xxvii; on airdrops of weapons, 275, 470; on contact with Gyalo Thondup, 59; on contact with Taiwan agents, 57–58, 59; on contact with Taktse Rinpoche, 60; and dispute about being sent to Central Tibet (Lhasa), 94–97; on dispute about CIA training, 91–92, 93; on exfiltration, 80–82; and exile of the Dalai Lama, 115, 470–72, 477–79; on failure of Litang mission, 102; on fighters fleeing to India, 481–82, 483; on length of training, 94; on Lotse staying in Lhoka, 138–39; on meetings with Phala and attempts to reach Dalai Lama, 111, 112–13, 113–14; on militias of Tibetan locals, 311–12; on money provided for mission, 108; moving out of Lhasa with Chushigandru, 125–27, 133; on Namseling/Chushigandru delegation to India for weapons, 310–11; on parachuting back into Tibet, 98–99; on return from debriefing, shootout during, 148; and Sichuan uprising, 56; on supplies provided by CIA, 99; as trader for Litang Monastery, 56; on training, 82–83; on unification of Khambas, 75; and weapons and assistance, request of Chushigandru for, 137, 138, 141, 144–45, 147; and wireless communication and encryption training, 83–85, 95, 97. *See also* CIA Tibet Project
autonomy. *See* internal autonomy of local Tibetan government

Baba Chandzö Tashi, 260
Baba Gen Ale, 298
Baba Gen Yeshi, 76
Baba Jangra Tashi (CIA trainee), 89, 97, 101, 102, 103, 279
Baba Lobsang Tsültrim, 220–21

Baba Phüntso Wangyal, 76
Bachen, 298
Bachung Pön, 296
Back Tibet, xxvii
Bai Yunfeng, 210
Baligyesum (Batang, Gyeltang, and Chantreng), 75, 76, 77
Bangladesh. *See* East Pakistan
Barshi: and assembly meeting to discuss using Tibetan troops against Chushigandru, 228; and demonstration of 10 March, 354; and demonstration of 10 March, incitement of, 343, 346–49, 350, 351, 352, 366, 369; divination for protection of Dalai Lama, 343, 344–45; and group of lower rank officials committed to oath, as informal bodyguards, 236, 343–44, 348; and invitation to the Dalai Lama to Chinese Military Headquarters, 342–43; unauthorized assembly meeting of, 231–36, 343, 369
Bashi Jedrungla, 228n46
Batang, 75, 88. *See also* Baligyesum
Battle for Lhasa (20–21 March 1959), xiii; overview, 497; alternatives that could have been taken but weren't, 370–72, 442, 455–56, 493–94, 497–99, 502; announcement to the public of, 449; battle plan and execution by the PLA, 448–50, 453–55, 456; beginning with Ramagang ferry site incident, 446–48; casualties of, 454; Central Military Commission denial then agreement with offensive, 408, 448, 450–53, 457–58; Central Military Commission investigation into Tan Guansan, 457–60; exile of Dalai Lama and, 441–42, 453, 456, 476–78; length of, 497; Mao strategy of containing rebels in Lhasa, 451; outlying areas, surrender of, 455; reinforcements ordered due to, 451, 452–53, 454; Temajog and Gyentsen joint suicide during, 352; treatment of captured and surrendered Tibetans, 314, 353n97, 435n71, 456–57, 457, 463, 467–68. *See also* end of old Tibet; Lhasa Uprising
Began Lotsawa, 86
Beijing: Dalai Lama visit to (1954–55), 34–36, 40–41, 120, 238; meeting (1953) to reaffirm gradualist policy, 202–3; meeting (1957) to reaffirm gradualist policy, 67, 203; Panchen Lama meeting (1951), 196–201
Bhutan: border with Tibet, 21; Chushigandru relocation and access to, 132; CIA agent Ashar given permission to travel through, 148, 310n72; ethnic Tibetans in, xivn1; independence of Tibet announced by emergency assembly, 399–400; and proposal to divide Tibet into Front and Back, 194; sovereignty of, 216–17; Tibetan refugees going to, 407
Big Three Monastic Seats. *See* Three Monastic Seats
Bisu, 258–59
Blue Chinese, expulsion of, 121–22, 124
Bodyguard Regiment (Kusung): and car travel by Dalai Lama, 338; Chinese Military Headquarters visit and restrictions on, 338–39, 345, 475, 496; and demonstration of 10 March, 356–57, 364, 371, 498; emergency assembly meeting resolution for better protection by, 230; Norbulinga guarded by, 356–57; and Sera Je College monk's revolt, 242; size of, 356n3; weapons of, 371; wearing PLA uniforms for ceremonial occasions, 238–39. *See also* Taklha
Bomdila, 485
Buck, Stuart, 109
Buddha Jayanti celebration, xxvii, 40, 41, 44, 47, 417, 500
Buddhism: CIA hope for Dalai Lama as "pope" of, 147; "Eastern March of Buddhism," 2n2. *See also* Tibetan Buddhism
Bumtang Chömpel Thubden, 226n37
Burma, 47
Butön Rimpoche, 487
Bylekuppe (Tibetan resettlement camp, India), 157n17

Calcutta: Kashag meeting convened in, 62; U.S. Consulate, 47, 51, 52, 53, 80n19, 95, 137–38, 141, 142, 146, 148, 277
CCP. *See* Chinese Communist Party
Central Committee: and Battle for Lhasa, 450–51, 452, 453; and defensive military/offensive political policy for Lhasa Uprising, 404–5, 406–11, 413–15, 445, 446; direct oversight of TWC work by, 72, 184, 330, 458; and edict from Dalai Lama disavowing independence activities in Tibet, 316–17; and Front/Back Tibet rationale to install autonomous Panchen Lama, 191–92, 195, 196; on full-scale vs. localized revolts, 323–25, 331–35, 411, 465, 495–96; "Great Contraction"/"Great Discontinuance" (14 May 1957) on reforms, 67–73, 157, 179–80, 203–5, 224, 315, 329–30,

Central Committee *(continued)*
469, 490; "Guidance Regarding the Issues and Requests Put Forward by the Panchen's Delegation," 191–92, 195; Kashag request for meeting in Beijing for direct discussion (Nov. 1958), 317–22; Lhasa Uprising instructions from Mao and, 404–8, 411–15; and 9/4 instructions on reforms, 38–40, 44, 73, 203, 490; on Nyemo campaign (first), 164; Politburo, 38n36, 413–14; and reassertion of gradualist policy among TWC, 34, 329–30; and strategic goal of "liberation"/incorporation of Tibet, 21. *See also* Central Military Commission (Beijing); Mao Zedong

Central Intelligence Agency. *See* CIA

Central Military Commission (Beijing): alarmed by Tsetang/Gonggar attacks, 292, 304; and Battle for Lhasa, denial then agreement with offensive, 408, 448, 450–53, 457–58; and Battle for Lhasa, investigation of Tan Guansan, 457–60; and decision to allow escape of the Dalai Lama, 437–38; ordering reinforcements of PLA to quash the revolt, 452, 480; on Shang weapons cache seizure, 178–79. *See also* Chinese Military Headquarters (Lhasa); People's Liberation Army

Central Tibet. *See* Lhasa

chabu, xxvii

Chadang Regiment, 239

Chagdrung, 347

Chagö Namgyel Dorje, 244

Chamba Yönden, 306

Chamdo Dortse, 263, 296, 297

Chamdo Khenjung. *See* Sonam Gyatso (Chamdo Khenjung)

Chamdo Province, xxvii; Chamdo Liberation Committee, 265, 266; Chinese belief in Kashag support for armed revolt in, 462; Chinese militia formed in, 326; and localized vs. full-scale revolts, distinction between, 324–25; as part of political Tibet, xv; PLA offensive in (1959), 480n27; and reforms, policy for, 466; reforms to be triggered by full-scale revolts, 325; uprising against forced land reforms in (1956), 38, 68

—PLA INVASION OF (1950): fall of the Tibetan army in, xv, 24; Khamba support and assistance to PLA, 242, 243; and plans for Front/Back Tibet with Panchen Lama, 191, 192; PLA units involved in, xxxi, 182–83n5; treatment of Tibetan soldiers by, 243n83

Chamdo Trungyik Küncho Dorje, 124

chandzö, xxvii

Changchub Jimpa, 477

Changkyim (Tregang), 228n46, 391–92, 399, 429–30

Changra Khenjung, 456

Chantreng, 75. *See also* Baligyesum

Chape, 218–19, 231, 350, 455

Che Jigme, xxviii, 187, 189, 190, 191, 197, 199n49, 468

Chemmo. *See* Phala, Thubden Wönden

Chen Yi, 238

Chen Zhuneng (Tempa Dargye), 140, 156–57, 160

Chhibber, S. L., 429–30

Chiang Kai-shek, xv; agreeing to supply weapons to Chushigandru, 312; fleeing to Formosa, 20; letter from Tibetan government to, 1–2; Tibet not ruled by, 20; United States' support for, 50, 54. *See also* Guomindang (GMD); Taiwan

ChiComs, 54

Chimi Gombo, 255–56, 257, 259–60, 264

China: inland (Ch. neidi), as term, 18n28; map, *xxxvi*; and Tibetan Buddhism as "civilizing project," 1–2. *See also* People's Republic of China; Qing Dynasty; Republic of China (1911–1949); Taiwan (Republic of China)

Chinese Civil War (1945–49), 20, 22, 186

Chinese Communist Party (CCP): on Chushigandru, 79; and Panchen Lama (10th), 186–89; "struggle sessions" run by, 25, 258, 486–89; unification of China as goal of, 21. *See also* Central Committee

Chinese Foreign Ministry, on anti-Chinese Tibetan resistance in India, 152

Chinese Military Headquarters (Lhasa): exile of the Dalai Lama, instruction to allow his escape, 405, 406–7, 412, 413, 415, 437–38; exile of the Dalai Lama, knowledge of, 428, 436–38; kalöns' visit to, to offer assurances about the 10 March demonstration, 372–74, 402–3, 404, 409n13; Lhasa Uprising and invitation to the Dalai Lama to seek protection in, 422–23, 424–25, 428–29, 430, 436; ultimatum of military action in response to demonstration of 10 March, 373–74

—INVITATION TO THE DALAI LAMA TO A SHOW: overview, 496; arrangements for visit, 335–40, 345, 346, 357–58, 362–63; and Bodyguard Regiment, restrictions on presence of, 338–39, 345, 475, 496; cancellation by Dalai Lama, 366–67; cancellation by Dalai Lama, exchange of letters with Tan Guansan following, 384–87, 394–97, 402, 411, 416, 422–26, 436; and continued need for maintaining cordial relations with the Chinese, 339–40; Dalai Lama expressing that there was no danger, 336, 337, 339, 346, 357, 366, 402, 496; Kashag members to accompany, 358–59; Kashag notified on 9 March about, 346, 357; Ngabö and, 364–65; no Chinese intent to harm the Dalai Lama, 353, 366; PLA and, 357–58n9, 363; route of the Dalai Lama, safety of, 357, 357–58n9; Tibetan government (newly established at Lhüntse) statement on, 475; Tibetan officials' concerns for safety of, 339, 340, 342–43, 345–46, 366, 402, 496; Tibetan officials' fears, factors fueling, 340–42, 343–45; welcome prepared for the Dalai Lama, 362–63, 366. *See also* demonstration of 10 March 1959 at Norbulinga

Chö Bulü (CIA trainee), 89, 90, 98, 101, 103, 279

Chödegön Monastery, 240–41

Chödrag, 274

Chölung Monastery, 106

Chölungnanga, 420, 421

Chömphela, 228n46

Chongye Riudechen, 262–63, 277, 293–94, 295, 300, 471–72

Chou Enlai, 215n7

Chudo Pön, 298

Chundogyang, 482

Chushigandru, xxviii, xxxii, *134*; Chinese awareness of, 77–78, 79, 80, 124; and Chinese defectors, 130–32, 139–40, 156–57, 157n17, 160, 168, 177, 291; Chinese-sent fakes, 255; CIA desire for information on, 109, 110; CIA recommendation to network and blend in, 145–46, 147; and conscripted troops, 261, 267, 280, 281; Dalai Lama and, 80, 119–21; as escalating to full-scale rebellion, Mao and Central Committee declaring, 331–35; as exile escort for the Dalai Lama, *440*, 471–72, *471*, 480; exit pathway for the Dalai Lama as responsibility of, 284–85, 293, 297–98, 305, 418, 422; fleeing to India, 157n17, 481–82, 483; formation of, 56, 74–80, 492; fortified compounds, pattern of failures in attacks on, 298; Gombo Tashi as leader of, 56, 79; Gombo Tashi's absence, effects of, 179, 244, 277, 293, 299, 305, 307–8, 310–11, 393–94, 481; Gonggar Ambush (December 1958), 286, 287–93, 328, 341; highway raids by (*see at* highways); lack of comprehensive insurgency plan, 277; naming of organization, 78; and negative attitudes toward Khambas, 106; never contacted to join the Lhasa Uprising, 415, 445; number of, estimated, 445; oath-taking ceremony, 78–79; PLA evaluation of, 178–79; PLA offensive strategies allowed under special circumstances, 149–50, 154–55, 323–25 (*see also* Shang Ganden Chöngor government weapons cache seizure by Gombo Tashi), 123–24, 135; PLA ordered to take defensive-only stance with, 129–30, 149–50, 154, 160, 164, 179–80, 305, 481; public demonstration by (1957), 77–78; religious activities as pretext for political organizing, 75–77, 92, 129; tactical plan for keeping Lhoka free of the PLA, 293, 294, 296, 297–98; Tibetan army interest in, 79, 124, 130, 135, 282; Tibetan government (newly established at Lhüntse) moving to integrate, 473n17; unification of Khambas as goal of, 74–75, 135; weakness and fragmentation of, 178, 244, 260n48, 276–77, 278n21, 294–98, 481–82. *See also* CIA Tibet Project—mission with Chushigandru; Derge regiment; Gombo Tashi; horses and mules; Kashag—and Chushigandru; Namseling, Penjor Jigme—Chushigandru delegation sent by assembly and mission of; Shang Ganden Chöngor government weapons cache seizure by Gombo Tashi; Tibetan army—proposal to attack Chushigandru

—HEADQUARTERED IN LHOKA: evasion of the Chinese as Gombo Tashi order, 136–37, 138; food and fodder, robbing and abusing local Tibetans to procure, 228–29, 252–62, 264, 293–94, 295–96, 305, 316, 393; lack of defenses for, 263–64, 481; Military Code of, 134–35, 294; and militias of rural Tibetans, 136, 306–8, 392–94, 420–21; new name of organization ("Volunteer Defenders of the Faith," Tib. tanglang tensung magar), 135; number of fighters, 136, 244; office of support logistics (tsondzin), 134, 254, 295, 309, 310; opening ceremony of headquarters, 135; and the pan-Tibet insurgency strategy, 133, 135; PLA offensive (1959), 480, 481; regimental and battle organization of, 133–34, 161; and weapons and ammunition, need for, 135–36; weapons brought by fighters, 135–36

—MOVEMENT OUT OF LHASA: and Chinese defector, 130–32; Chinese "non-reaction" to,

Chushigandru *(continued)*
Mao's gradualist policy calling for, 129–30, 149–52; CIA Tibet mission going with, 125–27, 133; consultation with deity Shungden on, 124–26; evasion of the Chinese and, 128, 129; expulsion of the Blue Chinese, effect of, 122, 124; food and fodder supplies not planned for, 254; journeys, 128, 129–30, 132–33; Lhoka/Drigutang as destination of, 123, 128–29; and oath-taking ceremony, 123–24; Phala as encouraging, 118–19, 122–23; and weapons cache, desire to procure, 119, 122

Chusul, 160, 172, 286, 287, 289, 291, 308, 394, 480

CIA (Central Intelligence Agency): Cold War strategy against Communist China, 45, 46–47, 52, 54, 271–72, 481, 492, 502; "cowboy" operations of, 53; Far East Division of, 53; Hungarian debacle of, 272; refusal to release documents, xvi, 52, 53n75, 84, 89–90, 142n28; Sichuan uprising as opportunity for, 46–47, 51; U-2 reconnaissance flights, and downing of, 484. *See also* CIA Tibet Project

CIA Tibet Project: airdrops of Khamba agents into Tibet and Litang (ST BARNUM), 99–100, 101–3, 104; airdrops of Tibetan agents, second training group, 483–85; Chushigandru mission (*see* CIA Tibet Project—mission with Chushigandru); and exile of the Dalai Lama, 115, 470–72, 477–79; as failure that indirectly helped to destroy traditional Tibetan society, 314; and the incorrect impression that the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government were committed to fighting against the Chinese, 47–48, 95, 96, 103, 110, 113; independence of Tibet not a goal of, 54–55, 492; Lhasa mission (*see* CIA Tibet Project—mission in Lhasa); limited scope of, 54–55, 93, 147–48, 492; Litang mission as unsuccessful, 102–3; money given for Tibet support, 58, 478–79, 500–501; orders received to develop covert Tibet operation, 52; and plausible deniability, 88, 99, 145, 272; requirement of request for weapons from the Dalai Lama/Tibetan government, 94–95, 103, 147, 271, 478; second group of trainees, 272, 470, 480, 501n11; second training group mission as unsuccessful, 483–85; and territory of Tibet, attempts to hang onto, 480–82, 485. *See also* Gyalo Thondup (Dalai Lama's brother); Taktse Rinpoche (Dalai Lama's brother)

—ST CIRCUS (TRAINING), xvii, xxxiii, 54, 83–87; Dalai Lama knowledge of, 63, 114–16; date of exfiltration, 80; discussions and preparations for, 52–54; dispute over Khamba disappointment in training, 88–93; dispute with Athar about being sent to Central Tibet (Lhasa), 94–97; exfiltration of six trainees to Saipan, 80–82; length of training, 94n50; letter from Gombo Tashi, 92, 111; Litang Khamba recruits, 55–60, 74; parachute training, 98; as "pilot" training program, 54; schedule of training, 82–83; seen by Tibetans as the start of American support for Tibetan independence, 74, 111; supplies and weapons given to trainees, 99; Taktse Rinpoche and, 81, 82n26, 87, 94, 95–97; weapons training, 83, 88–91, 93, 99; wireless communication and encryption training, 83–87

—MISSION IN LHASA: airdrop of Khamba agents into Central Tibet, 101, 104; and Chushigandru, moving out of Lhasa with, 125–27, 133; dispute with Athar about being sent to Central Tibet (Lhasa), 94–97; equipment for, 104; intelligence from, quality of, 109–10; main goal to meet Phala/Dalai Lama and find out opposition plans and requests for help, 103–4, 109, 110–18, 127; money provided, 108; and pan-Tibet insurgency strategy, 103, 110; waiting period to evade Chinese detection, 104–8; and wireless communication, 104, 106, 107, 108–10

—MISSION WITH CHUSHIGANDRU: airdrops of weapons, 102, 147, 222, 264, 266–67, 314; airdrops of weapons (first), 271–77, 308, 309, 311, 470; airdrops of weapons (second), 273n8, 278, 470–71; airdrops of weapons (third and subsequent), as too late, 273n8, 482–83, 485; airdrops would never have been sufficient to supply a large-scale insurgency, 102, 273; debriefing of Athar, 137–39, 141–48; debriefing of Chinese defector, request for, 140; distribution of weapons, 275–77, 471, 472; as distrusted by Khambas, 308–9, 311; fighters fleeing to India, and agents following, 481–82, 483; as hope of Tibetan elite, 244; and militias of local Tibetans, 311–12; moving to military headquarters, 125–27, 133; Mustang (Nepal) headquarters set up by, 279, 484, 485, 500–501; Pemakö headquarters set up by, 485; plan for assistance developed by, 138, 141, 142–43, 144–46, 147–48; and radios, lack of, 272, 277, 481; recommendation to Chushigandru to network and blend in, 145–46, 147; removal from Chushigandru headquarters,

309; request from Chushigandru to provide weapons, 309; request from Gombo Tashi to provide weapons, 137–41, 143–47; return from escorting the Dalai Lama into India, 479, 480; return of Athar from debriefing, 148, 273, 277, 310n72; return of Gyadotsang Wangdü (CIA trainee), 277–79; second group of trainees, 470; small amount of weapons provided by the U.S., 59–60, 272–73, 275, 308, 311, 314, 470; territory of Tibet, insistence to hang onto, 480–82; warning about Derge plan to rescue Gombo Tashi, 276; warning about Namseling sending mission to India for weapons, 309–10; warning about Shang weapons cache seizure, 139–40; weapons requests by Chushigandru, 309; and wireless communication, 137–38, 140, 273–75, 278
—WIRELESS COMMUNICATION: and Chushigandru mission, 137–38, 140, 273–75, 278; and dispute about Athar being sent to Lhasa, 95, 97; and dispute about nature of training of Khambas, 88, 89, 91, 93; encryption and encryption training, 84–87, 109–10; equipment for, 83–84, 104; as goal of Tibet Project, 94–95; and Lhasa mission, 104, 106, 107, 108–10; Litang mission and failure of, 102; and separation of Lotse during Athar's debriefing, 138–39
citation conventions, xix
class reforms. *See* democratic reforms
code. *See* encryption
Cold War: NSC directive on covert operations in (NSC 5412/2), 45–46; Tibet support as part of strategy to contain Communist China, 45, 46, 52, 54, 271–72, 481, 492. *See also* CIA
Command Center (gagökang) at Norbulinga: derogatory language of mimang in, 398; escape of the Dalai Lama and continued meetings of, 441; establishment of, 380; food and supplies provisions and, 380, 387; as giving cover to Kashag involvement, 380; money for, 387; restraint on mimang leaders attempted via, 381–82, 416; review of recommendations by the Kashag, 381; weapons handling and distribution, 380–81, 397–98, 422. *See also* mimang (the people)—guard force for Norbulinga
commerce, reform policy on, 467
communes, delay of implementation of, 468
Conboy, Kenneth, 80n19, 90, 101n1, 278n22
corvée labor. *See* miser
Csoma de Körös, Alexander, 87
Cultural Revolution: belief that Tibet would have been destroyed in, if not earlier, 497, 498; communes established in Tibet, 468; Ngabö's position that it would not have happened in Tibet, 498–99
currency: Chinese silver dayan coins, xxviii, 36, 223, 253; Tibetan, 35, 36, 68, 223, 473

Dagden phodrang, 386n79
Dakpo, 255–56, 259–60, 295–96
Dalai Lama(s): appointment of kalöns by, 14; bypassed by Kashag on decisions, 16–17; "court" advisors of, 13–14; granting manorial estates, 6; hypothetical example of Kashag process of recommendations to, 15–16; ink color distinguishing emendations by, 15; isolation of, 12, 16, 17; Kashag as influence on, 14, 15, 16–18; new vs. experienced, and power of the Kashag, 17; personal attributes of, and use of power, 11–13; processions for travel outside the palace by, 337–38; regent for, 11, 18, 242–43; as ruler in Tibetan government structure, 9, 11; seal of (bugdam), 16n26; successor to, search for incarnation of, 11; tutors of, 13
Dalai Lama (7th), 355
Dalai Lama (13th): as autocrat, 12–13, 17; conflict with the 9th Panchen Lama, 185, 186, 199–201; death of, 18, 226n39; exile to flee 1904 British invasion, 18, 20; Loseling College incident (1921), 364; modernizing movement blocked by, 490; and Office of Silön, 18; personal attributes of, and use of power, 12–13
Dalai Lama (14th): brothers of (*see* Gyalo Thondup; Lobsang Samden; Taktse Rinpoche); on Chinese defectors, 131–32; Chinese recognition that he might be involved with the rebels, 406, 407; and Chushigandru, awareness of, 80, 119–21; CIA hope for, as "Buddhist pope," 147; CIA requirement of request for weapons from, 94–95, 103, 147, 271, 478; and CIA Tibet Project Lhasa mission, 108, 110–18, 143; continuing connection to anti-Chinese resistance, 117–18, 119–20, 251–52, 491–92; dual strategy employed by, 64–65, 117–18, 120, 153, 243–45, 491–92, 494–95; edict disavowing independence activities (1958), 316–17; on formation of popular resistance, 31; geshe degree exams of, 116–17, 213–14, *214*, 336–37, 341–42, 363, 417; impressed by China's progress and help

Dalai Lama *(continued)*
for the poor, 35; influences on, 13–14, 17–18, 41, 350; interview with, xvii; on the Kashag, interactions with, 17–18; manual laborers and tutors as information sources for, 12, 14, 432; and Namseling mission to Chushigandru, 246, 248, 251–53; Nehru invited to visit Lhasa by, 215; People's Associations banned by, 75; personal attributes of, and use of power, 12–13; personal monk attendants, 13, 14; regent for (Reting Rinpoche), 18, 242–43; religious activities on behalf of, and Khamba political organizing, 76–77, 92; removal to Yadong, and return from (1950–51), 14, 24, 26–27, 28, 29, 44, 183, 419; request to join Communist Party, 35; secret alliance between Tibetan government and the resistance forces in India, knowledge and approval by, 63–67; on Surkhang's speech to Chinese officers, 220; and Tan Guansan, letter exchange with, 384–87, 394–97, 402, 411, 416, 422–26, 436; travel by car to attend meetings, 337–38; travel by "great procession," 337, 357; visit to Beijing (1954–55), 34–36, 40–41, 120, 238; visit to India (1956–57), and exile considered, xiii, 17–18, 40–45, 47, 48, 49, 60–62, 113, 417, 490–91, 500. *See also* gradualist policy of incorporation of Tibet; Kashag; National People's Congress (NPC); Panchen Lama; Secretariat Office of the Dalai Lama; Sitsab (acting prime ministers); Tibetan Buddhism; Tibetan government; Tibet Autonomous Region
—SAFETY OF: assassination plot, suspected, 342; and Barshi's unauthorized organization to protect, 231–36, 343–44; Chinese fortifications and threat to, 231–32, 234, 341; Chinese invitation to safety during Lhasa Uprising at the Chinese Military Headquarters, 422–23, 424–25, 428–29, 430, 436; Chinese meetings and fear of arrest of, 322; and Chinese strategic decision to allow the Dalai Lama to escape, 438; emboldenment of demonstrators as threat to, 388–89; exit path to India, Chushigandru charged with responsibility for, 284–85, 293, 297–98, 305, 418, 422; and geshe degree exams, 341–42; and logag (astrologically inauspicious year), 341; and oath of members of Chushigandru and Tibetan army to protect, 283–84, 285; perception of decreased Chinese respect as fueling fears for, 340; Phala's overriding concern for, 114–15, 118–19, 153, 284–85, 322, 350–51. *See also* Chinese Military Headquarters—invitation to the Dalai Lama; Command Center at Norbulinga; demonstration of 10 March 1959 at Norbulinga; exile of the 14th Dalai Lama; mimang (the people)—guard force for Norbulinga
Damshung Airport, 173, 325, 480
Darjeeling: anti-Chinese activities in, 215; English schools in, 21. *See also* Kalimpong
dayan (silver Chinese coins), xxviii, 36, 223, 253
death sentence, reform policy and, 467–68
Dekyilinga. *See* Indian Consulate (Dekyilinga) (Lhasa)
democratic reforms, xxviii; anxiety and fear in Lhasa about, 38, 40, 44, 203; decision of Dalai Lama to return to Lhasa (1957) based on fear of, 62; "Great Expansion" of, under Fan Ming, 38–39, 40, 41, 45, 67, 203; Nehru viewing as inevitable, 42–43, 267–68; peaceful liberation (Ch. heping jiefang, Tib. shiwei jingdrü), 23–25; purchasing method, 37n32, 446; seen as threat to money lending income of monasteries, 5; Socialist Transformation campaign, 36–37, 39; Zhou Enlai sent to India to reassure Dalai Lama about, 44–45, 213. *See also* end of old Tibet—democratic reforms imposed
—DELAYED AS PART OF GRADUALIST POLICY, 24–27, 36, 39–40, 44–45, 62, 67–73, 317, 462; "Great Contraction"/"Great Discontinuance" (14 May 1957) and, 67–73, 157, 179–80, 203–5, 224, 329–30, 469, 490; length of time for, as core contested issue, 26; "9/4" instructions to TWC about, 38–40, 44, 62, 64, 73, 203, 490. *See also* gradualist policy of incorporation of Tibet
—FORCED: effect on Dalai Lama's outlook of, 40–41; full-scale rebellion as triggering, 325, 412, 414, 465, 495–96; as threat to contain Chushigandru, 150–51, 495; and uprising in Chamdo, 38, 68. *See also* Sichuan Province—uprisings against forced democratic reforms
demonstration by Chushigandru (1957), 77–78
demonstration of 10 March 1959 at Norbulinga, *355, 356*; Bodyguard Regiment and, 356–57, 364, 371, 498; cancellation of visit to Chinese Military Headquarters, 366–69, 374–75; the Chinese informed of, 349, 362; the Dalai Lama/Kashag explanations intended to calm the Chinese and preclude any attacks, 396–97; the Dalai Lama/Kashag explanation

to the Chinese that it wasn't the Tibetan government's doing, 364, 366–67, 372–74, 386–87; the Dalai Lama/Kashag failure to disperse the demonstrators as emboldening them, 388–89, 415, 496–97, 498; the Dalai Lama/Kashag immediate priority of defusing the crowd, 362, 363–66; the Dalai Lama/Kashag potential alternatives that could have been considered but weren't, 370–72, 442, 455–56, 493–94, 497–99, 502; the Dalai Lama's knowledge of, 349, 352, 359, 370; goal of, to prevent the Dalai Lama from visiting the Chinese Military Headquarters, 355, 358, 361, 366; incitement of, by Tibetan officials to prevent attendance by the Dalai Lama, 340, 343, 346–50, 366, 369, 496, 498; incitement of, Phala as the official behind, 350–53, 366, 498; korchagpa (official message deliverers) disseminating the message for, 347–48, 350, 353n97; as morphing into dangerous anti-Chinese protest, 357n5, 360–61, 366, 369–70, 475, 496–97; size of crowd, 349n86; Tan Guansan/Dalai Lama letter exchange following, 384–87, 394–97, 402, 411, 416, 422–26, 436; Tibetan government (newly established at Lhüntse) statement on, 475. *See also* assemblies, emergency meetings in response to demonstration of 10 March; Chinese Military Headquarters (Lhasa), invitation to Dalai Lama; Lhasa Uprising; mimang

—THE MIMANG (THE PEOPLE) AND: anti-Chinese sentiments of, 358, 360–61; anti–Tibetan government sentiments of, 358–62; armed guards at Norbulinga (Khambas), 369, 384, 386, 403; and cancellation of Dalai Lama's visit to Chinese Military Headquarters, 367–68, 372, 374–75; demands made by mimang leadership during, 368–70; derogatory and insulting shouts to Tibetan officials by, 368; expansion into Lhasa city, 369–70, 401–2; gathering at Norbulinga, 354–55, 356–57; Indian Consulate asked for help by, 360; search of kalöns' car attempting to leave, 372; violence of (attack on Kalön Sambo, murder of Chamdo Khenjung Sonam Gyatso), 358–60, 365, 367, 369–70, 374, 386, 402, 403, 415, 455. *See also* mimang (the people)

Deng Shaodong, xxviii, 157, 160, 178–79; and Battle for Lhasa, 446–48, 451, 452; and invitation to the Dalai Lama to attend a show at Military Headquarters, 335–36, 337, 338

Deng Xiaoping, xxviii, xxxi; and Fan Ming, 202–3, 204–5; and "Great Contraction" (1957), 67, 204; and Mao's gradualist policy, 67–68, 202–3; potential of Tibet's autonomy lasting until rule of, 499; and Second Field Army/SWB leadership, 182–83n5; and the Tibetan rebellions, 414

Derge regiment of Chushigandru, 75, 132–33, 165; and feud with Central Command, 244, 260n48, 276, 277, 278n21, 294–98; and food and fodder, robbing and abuses to procure, 257, 259–60, 293–94, 295–96; plan to rescue Gombo Tashi, 276, 295, 296–97

Dingkyi Dzong, 241

Ding Sheng, 480

divinations, decisions based on, 131, 282, 286, 298, 421; banning of, 432n66; Barshi and, 343, 344–45; divine lottery (senriy), xxviii, 419, 421, 422, 431; exile of the Dalai Lama and, 396, 419–20, 422, 431–32; Gombo Tashi and, 78, 124–26, 129, 132, 168, 174–75

dobdo, xxviii

Dokarsumdo, 156, 161–64

Dombor, Ngawang Rigdrol, 14n21, 358, 359, 367n37, 374, 397

dotse, xxviii

"DPRC" (Documents from the People's Republic of China), xvi

Drachi, 295

Drakten, 122–23, 153, 226–29, 249, 340; and arming the mimang, 398; and demonstration of 10 March, 357, 367–68; and emergency assembly meetings, 375, 376, 377, 388; and exile of the Dalai Lama, 416; and invitation to Dalai Lama to Chinese Military Headquarters, 342–43, 345–46

Dranang, 291–92, 295

Drepung Monastery, xxxiii; aid to Chushigandru, 283, 286; and assemblies (tsondu) (National Assemblies), 18–19, 30n21, 403; continuation of, under Chinese occupation, 223–24; costs of maintaining, 5; in delegation for edict asking the Khambas to go home (1958), 212–13; and emergency assemblies, 403; geshe exam of Dalai Lama, *214*, 342; Loseling College incident (1921), 364; and mass monasticism, 2–3; and mimang security guards, 403; monks of, at demonstration of 10 March 1959, 359; and Namseling delegation, 246n3; oral histories archive, xviii

Drigu Lamathang, 274

Drigung, 132, 174, 264–65, 281, 282

Drigung Kyamgön Rinpoche, 282
Drigung Lungshö, 174, 282
Drigutang: Chushigandru moving to, xxviii, 3, 123, 128–29, 132, 134, 136, 253; CIA in, 137, 138–40, 273–74, 275, 309; Namseling delegation sent to, 230. *See also* Chushigandru—movement out of Lhasa; Lhoka
drönyerchemmo, xxviii
Dulles, Allen, 272, 501
Dulles, John Foster, 52, 272
Dündrül (Namseling bodyguard), 248, 250, 251, 262–63
Dungar Monastery, 171
Dutt, S., 268, 269–70
Du Xiaome, 288, 289–91
dzasa, xxviii
Dzogchen Pema Rindzin, 379
dzong, xxviii
dzongpön, xxviii

Eastern Tibet, and naming of Chushigandru, 78. *See also* Chushigandru; Sichuan Province
East Pakistan: exfiltration of CIA trainees through, 52, 81–82; infiltration of CIA trainees through, 99, 101–2; weapons drops through, 273, 483
Ecclesiastic Office (yigtsang), xxix, xxxiii, 15, 235n64
Eisenhower, Dwight D., and administration, 45–46, 103, 180, 484, 501
encryption: CIA's Tibetan Project and, 84–87, 109–10; of exile communications, 420; of Kashag/Ngabö communication during Lhasa Uprising, 420, 428–29; and short-lived secret alliance between resistance forces in India and the Kashag, 64–67; for telegraph communications, 84, *85*, 428; the Tibetan writing system and, 85–87
end of old Tibet: alternatives that could have been taken but weren't, 370–72, 442, 455–56, 493–94, 497–99, 502; Chushigandru fighters and Tibetan army soldiers fleeing to India, 157n17, 481–82, 483; CIA Tibet Project/State Department and, 480–85, 500–502; dissolution of Tibetan local government, 468–69, 473; "fight and do reforms simultaneously" as guideline for, 461, 463, 464; international recognition of independence of Tibet not forthcoming, 500–502; "old society" replaced with "new society," xiii, 28, 267–68, 469, 485–89, 497; PLA offensives outside of Lhasa, 480, 480n27, 481, 485; populace fleeing to India, 261, 481; propaganda guidelines for, 464, 466; Tibetan cadres, training and promotion of, 468; and "Tibet Question," emergence of, 500–502; treatment of captured Tibetan fighters and leaders, 314, 353n97, 435n71, 456–57, 457, 463, 467–68; treatment of monks, 463–64, 466–67, 486–89; treatment of the masses, policy on, 464–65, 467, 468; winning over Tibetans as goal in, 464–65. *See also* Battle for Lhasa; exile of the Dalai Lama; Tibetan government (newly established at Lhüntse) (1959); Tibetan government-in-exile
—DEMOCRATIC REFORMS IMPOSED: communes, delay of, 468; destruction of mass monasticism, 485–89; destruction of Tibetan Buddhist civilization, 485–89, 495, 496–97, 500; "fight and [do] reforms simultaneously" as guideline for, 461, 463, 464; government reform, 467; as impetus for new Tibetan government established at Lhüntse, 473; order of provinces to carry out reforms, 466; policy of the Central Committee on how to implement, 461–68; purchasing method, 466; "three antis and two concessions," 486
ethnographic Tibet: Battle for Lhasa and strategy of containing rebels to Lhasa, 451; distinguished from political Tibet, xiv–xv; map of, *xxxvi*; policy of continued reforms in, 70–71. *See also* Amdowas; Gansu Province; Khambas; Litang Khambas; Qinghai Province; Sichuan Province; Tibet (political); Yunnan Province
exile of the 14th Dalai Lama: Chinese belief the Dalai Lama would be abducted, 404, 414, 424; Chinese theory that Tibetan officials would kill the Dalai Lama, 438; Chushigandru offensives and pressure for, 417; and fighters fleeing to India, 157n17, 481–82, 483; gradualist policy and desire to prevent, 24; JKTS pressure for, 41, 62, 116, 417; Lhasa Uprising and Phala/Surkhang decision to pursue, 390, 396, 415, 417, 418, 431; and pan-Tibetan national identity, 135; removal to Yadong and pressure to go into (1950–51), 26, 351, 416–17; United States pressure to go into, 26, 45, 416–17; visit to India (1956–57) and consideration of staying in, xiii, 17–18, 40–45, 47, 48, 49, 60–62, 113, 417, 490–91, 500
—ESCAPE IN MARCH 1959, *440*, *442*, *471–72*, *474*, *479*; ad hoc committee of top officials, 442,

442; Battle for Lhasa and, 441–42, 453, 456, 476–77; belief that the Chinese were about to shell Norbulinga, 423–27, 429, 430–31, 435, 475; Chinese concealment/announcement of, 442n8, 453; Chinese knowledge that the Dalai Lama had left Lhasa, 428, 436–38; Chinese policy to allow the escape, 405, 406–7, 412, 413, 415, 437–38; Chushigandru escort to India, *440*, 471–72, *471*, 480; CIA mission and, 115, 470–72, 477–79; Dalai Lama's consent, 432, 497; Dalai Lama's consent, delay of, 419–20, 422, 422–23, 500; Dalai Lama's letter to small group of Tibetan officials, 440–41, 443; Dalai Lama's narrative of escape, 433–35, 439; Dalai Lama's regrets, 441, 497–98, 500; divinations and, 396, 419–20, 422, 431–32; entourage of, 418, 432–33, 434, 434–35, 472, 475, 478–79; and fear of PLA troops in pursuit, 418, 439–40, 477; government after, vagueness of plans for, 419, 472–73; horses and supplies for, 418, 435, 439; independence of Tibet announced by assembly, 427–28; India, decision to go to, 429–30, 476–79, *479*; and letter exchange between Tan Guansan and the Dalai Lama, 422–26, 436; the Lhüntse Dzong interlude, 115, 473–77; manorial estates, assistance from, 418; money given by CIA mission agent, 478–79; Ngabö consultation on, 420; Phala chosen as organizer, 415–16; practice runs in everyday clothes, 433; report on conditions by Lobsang Yeshe (Ngawang Senge), 420–22; route, 418, 432, 439–40; safe exit pathway through Lhoka, Chushigandru responsibility for securing, 284–85, 293, 297–98, 305, 418, 422; secrecy continuing after escape, as resulting in heavy casualties at Norbulinga, 441–42, 456; secrecy from the Chinese, 415–16, 418, 424, 425, 428–29, 430, 436; secrecy from the mimang and other officials, 416, 418, 429, 433–34, 435; Tibetan army ordered to destroy pathway behind Dalai Lama entourage, 421; Tibetan government (newly established at Lhüntse) statement on, 475–76; Trapchi Regiment guards on route, 432, 480, 482. *See also* end of old Tibet; Tibetan government (newly established at Lhüntse) (1959); Tibetan government-in-exile

Fan Jinzhen, 206
Fan Ming, xvii, xxix, 29, *35*; Anti-Rightist campaign and fall of, 181, 182, 205–11; and Deng Xiaoping, 202–3, 204–5; and dispute over leadership of TWC with Zhang Guohua, 181, 182–84, 204, 209; and "Great Expansion" of reforms via TWC control, 38–39, 40, 41, 45, 67, 203; lover of (Huang Lin), 207, 209; and Mao Zedung, letters to, 202, 204–5; and meeting (1953) to reaffirm gradualist policy, 202–3; and meeting (1957) to reaffirm gradualist policy, 67, 203; and 9/4 instructions to reaffirm gradualist policy, 38–40, 44, 67, 203; novel of (*The Story of the Journey to the West*), 206–8, 209, 210; opposition to Mao's gradualist policy, 33–34, 38, 67, 184–85, 202–5, 209–10, 407, 500; and Panchen Lama, instruction to establish good relations with, 186; and Panchen Lama, plan to divide Tibet using, 34, 184–85, 189, 192–93, 194, 195–97, 199n49, 201–2, 203, 209–10; reversal of plans of, via "Great Contraction"/"Great Discontinuance" (14 May 1957), 67–73, 157, 179–80, 203–5, 490; and unification vs. separation in Tibet, 184–85; wife of (Liang Feng), 206, 207n71, 208, 210
farmers, reform policy and, 466, 467, 468
feudalism, Tibetan manorial estate system compared to, 6, 8–9. *See also* manorial estate system
FitzGerald, Desmond, 52, 272
food and fodder issues: Chushigandru/Khamba abuses of local Tibetans to procure, 228–29, 252–62, 264, 293–94, 295–96, 305, 316, 393; Chushigandru move out of Lhasa and lack of planning for, 254; and militias, 311; and PLA defensive preparations, 411
Formosa, Guomindang officials fleeing to, 20. *See also* Chiang Kai-shek
France, JKTS appeal letter to, 50–51

Gadang Regiment. *See* Shigatse (Gadang) Regiment
Gadrang (Jigyab Khembo), xxix, 13, 350; and cancellation of visit to Chinese Military Headquarters, 367; and demonstration of 10 March, 356–57, 365; and the emergency assembly, 389, 403; in exile entourage, 433, 434, 442, *442*; and exile of the Dalai Lama, 415, 441, 497, 500; and invitation to the Dalai Lama to Chinese Military Headquarters, 337, 338, 339, 342, 345–46
gadrukpa (Dalai Lama's ceremonial dance troop), 357

Ganden Chöngor Monastery. *See* Shang Ganden Chöngor Monastery

Ganden Monastery, xxxiii; and assemblies (tsondu) (National Assemblies), 18–19, 30n21, 228n46, 403; continuation of, under Chinese occupation, 223–24; and emergency assemblies, 403; geshe exam of Dalai Lama, 213–14, 417; and Namseling delegation, 246n3

Ganden Phodrang. *See* Tibetan government (Dewashung, Ganden Phodrang); Tibetan government under Chinese occupation (officially called Sane Sishung or local government); Tibetan government (newly established at Lhüntse) (1959)

Gandhi, Indira, 216

Gangbu, 299, 300. *See also* Tsetang

Gan Siqi, 193

Gansu Province: armed revolt in, 462; cadres appointed from, 468; and Chushigandru membership, 79; ethnographic Tibet and, xiv, xv; PLA taking from GMD (1949), xv

Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (Jiangdong), xivn2, xxix. *See also* Sichuan Province

Gao Changzhu, 186

Gao Gang, 203

Gelong, 81

Gelugpa sect: and precedence of religion and monasticism, 4–5; regents from, 11. *See also* Three Monastic Seats; Tibetan government

Gen Chödrak, 284

Geshe Chödrag, 87

geshe degree exams, 116–17, 213–14, *214*, 336–37, 341–42, 363, 417

Geshe Wangye, 87, 108–9

Giamda, 333

GMD. *See* Guomindang (GMD)

GOI (Government of India). *See* India

Gombo Tashi (Andrutsang) (Andru Jinda), xxvii, xxix, xxxii; and Chushigrandru formation, 56, 75–79; and fighting in Lhasa, 95, 97; and food and fodder issues with Chushigandru, 254–55, 257, 266; and group of Litang Khambas recruited by the CIA, 55–57, 74, 92, 110–11, 135; journey to Lhoka of, 129; and Lhasa mission of the CIA Tibet Project, 107–8, 110–11, 113–14, 125–27, 271; and miser (peasants), concern for, 134–35, 137; Namseling relationship with, 79, 122–23, 124, 136, 247–48, 249, 252, 263, 308, 311; Phala relationship with, 79, 247–48, 252; and plan to force the Dalai Lama to remain in India, 49; return to Lhoka (April 1959) and then to India, 481, 483; Shungden divinations guiding decisions of, 78, 124–26, 129, 132, 168, 174–75; Tsetang attack plan, advising to delay, 299. *See also* Chushigandru; Shang Ganden Chöngor government weapons cache seizure by Gombo Tashi

—STRANDED IN SHOTALHOSUM: overview, 492–93; absence from Central Command in Lhoka, effects of, 179, 244, 277, 293, 299, 305, 307–8, 310–11, 393–94, 481; administration of area by local officials and traditional customs, 265; alliance with local Tibetans demanded by Gombo Tashi, 265–67; CIA mission expressing commitment to, 478; communication by horseback with Central Command, 277; conscripted troops, 267, 280, 281; flight to, 177–78, 264–65, 281; food and fodder issues and, 266; Lhasa Uprising and flight to Lhoka and India, 281; map of battles of, *xxxvi*; number of fighters remaining with, 178; and PLA command to avoid offensive actions, 179; Powo Tramog campaign, 267, 279–81, 298–99, 481; rescue of, Derge Regiment claim to plan for, 276, 295, 296–97; rumor of capture by Chinese, 285; Tibetan government (newly established at Lhüntse) appointing as commander in chief, 473n17; weapons never made it to Chushigandru headquarters, 277

Gonggar Ambush (December 1958), 286, 287–93, 328, 341

Gopön Nyerpala, 360, 368

Göshampa, 436

government-in-exile. *See* Tibetan government-in-exile

Government of India (GOI). *See* India

gradualist policy of incorporation of Tibet: Blue Chinese expelled from Tibet for undermining, 121–22; Chinese soldiers and officials instructed to win over Tibetans and not to attack, 27–28, 129–30, 328–29; Chushigandru formation as failure of, 80; Chushigandru movement out of Lhasa and, 129–30, 149–52; cooperation policy of the Dalai Lama/Kashag, 28, 33, 36, 153, 222, 335, 339–40, 361–62, 490–91; Dalai Lama and Tibetan government as stalling on, 23–24; Dalai Lama as prioritized over Panchen Lama in, 184; Dalai Lama visit to Beijing (1954–55), 34–36; definition of, 25; delay of democratic reforms and, 24–27, 36, 39–40, 44–45, 62, 67–73, 317, 462; delay of reforms, “Great Contraction”/”Great

Discontinuance" (14 May 1957), 67–73, 157, 179–80, 203–5, 224, 315, 329–30, 469, 490; and desire to prevent exile of Dalai Lama, 24; geography of Tibet as factor in, 22–23, 24; highway and airport construction, 27, 36, 73; instructions ("9/4"), 38–40, 44, 62, 64, 73, 203, 490; instructions of 6 January 1959, 329–31; Kashag responsibility for internal law and order, 150, 171, 212, 222–23, 329; and Mao's desire for Tibetans to accept Chinese incorporation, 23, 25, 180, 331; meeting (1953) to reaffirm, 202–3; meeting (1957) to reaffirm, 67, 203; negotiated incorporation/"peaceful liberation" as goal of, 23–24; opposition to, 33–34, 38, 67, 184–85, 202–5, 209–10, 407, 500; peaceful liberation as goal of, 25; as position of strength vs. weakness, 73, 331, 406, 407, 412–13, 462–63; and the rural Tibetan masses, 25n7; as strategic choice, 22, 25, 331, 490. *See also* democratic reforms; Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Liberation of Tibet (1951); Tibet Autonomous Region

—MILITARY SOLUTION AS LAST-RESORT UNDER, 22–23, 27, 73, 150, 231, 323; defensive-only instructions to PLA (*see* People's Liberation Army—defensive strategy ordered for); Lhasa Uprising and continued defensive military stance combined with aggressive political stance, 404–5, 406–11, 413–15, 445, 446; offensives to be triggered by full-scale revolts, 323–25, 331–35, 411, 465, 495–96; offensive strategies allowed under special circumstances, 149–50, 154–55, 323–25 (*see also* Shang Ganden Chöngor government weapons cache seizure by Gombo Tashi); reconsideration of, 322–23; reconsideration of, but no imminent threat perceived, 324, 335, 496; reconsideration of, Chushigandru offensives and, 323, 331–35; reconsideration of, Lhasa Uprising and, 407, 412; win-win aspect of, 27, 323, 412–13. *See also* end of old Tibet

Great Britain: Chinese assumption of involvement in Lhasa Uprising, 413; exile of 13th Dalai Lama to flee 1904 invasion by, 18, 20; the fall of Chamdo and help sought by Tibet, 24; independence of Tibet not recognized by, 20, 61, 313; India ruled under, and relations with Tibet, xvi, 21; JKTS appeal letter to, 50–51; Lhasa Uprising and Tibetan hope for help from, 444; national archives, xvi; PRC fear of diplomatic and military relationship with Tibet, 21–22; trade with Tibet, 21

"Great Contraction"/"Great Discontinuance" (14 May 1957), 67–73, 157, 179–80, 203–5, 224, 329–30, 469, 490

"great men" of history, 1

Guomindang (GMD), xxix; American weapons of, 222; expulsion from Lhasa by Tibetan government, 21, 247n4; and Panchen Lamas, 185, 186; top officials fleeing to Formosa, 20, 186. *See also* Chiang Kai-Shek; Taiwan

Guo Xilan, 210, 335

Guo Zixian, 160

Gutor, 335

Gyado Thöndrub, 259

Gyadotsang, xxix, 57n86, 58–59, 80, 99n65, 110n31, 111

Gyadotsang Wangdü (CIA trainee), 89, 90, 91–92, 98, 101, 102, 103, 277–79

Gyalo Thondup (Dalai Lama's brother), xiii, xxix, 18; annual payment from United States to, 58; and belief that Tibet's independence would be recognized, 500; belief that United States would assist with asylum and training, 43–44, 50; and Chushigandru headquarters in Pemakö, 485; CIA impression of, as representing the Dalai Lama and Tibetan government, 146–47; and the CIA led to believe that the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government were committed to fighting against the Chinese, 96, 103, 113; introduced to John Reagan, 41n39, 58; and JKTS, xxix, 41, 50–51; and Khamba recruits for CIA, 58–60, 74, 80, 81, 89, 92–93, 111; and Lhasa mission of CIA Tibet Project, 108n22, 114, 138, 141, 146–47, 148; messengers sent to Chushigandru, 477; and Namseling-sent mission for weapons procurement, 312; Nehru's opinion of, 43; pressure on Dalai Lama to enter exile, 61, 62; and second CIA training group, 483; as shocked by Nehru's denial of asylum, 42, 43; and Tsarong Dzasa, approach to, 313–14

Gyalrong Khembo, 246n3

Gyamtsoling Rinpoche, 385–86

Gyamtso Tashi, 226n37, 228n46, 229

Gyantse: Chinese militia formed in, 326; expulsion of Blue Chinese from, 121, 122; India's mission office in, 21

Gyantse Regiment: Namgyal Wangdü's secret mission to train recruits in Tsang, 306–8, 392–94, 420–22; and Sera Je College monk's revolt, 242; size of, 239. *See also* Ragashag, Phüntso Rabgye

Gyeda, 228n46

Gyegyepa, 229n49, 231, 316, 346, 357, 390, 420, 435
Gyeltang, 75. *See also* Baligyesum
Gyentsen (Thöndrup), 81, 82
Gyentsen Tempel, 171, 218
Gyurme Sonam Tobgye, 348

Halpern, Sam, 52
He Long, 184n9
herdsmen, reform policy on, 467
hereditarily bound peasant labor force. *See* miser
highways: construction by the Chinese, 27, 36, 73, 330; Gonggar Ambush (December 1958), 286, 287–93, 328, 341; lack of, and logistics of PLA invasion, 22–23; Sichuan-Lhasa highway raids and ambushes, 154–55, 327, 493; Wuyuk Dzomtang ambush (September 1958), 169–71, 217, 228, 292. *See also* Qinghai-Lhasa highway disruptions
Holober, Frank, xxix, 54; on annual payment to Gyalo Thondup, 58n90; on CIA strategy against Communist China, 46; on date of trainee exfiltration, 80n19; and debriefing of Athar, 139, 141–42, 143, 144–46; on encryption codebooks, 84n31; and Gyalo Thondup, 146–47; on Lhasa mission of Tibet Project, 109–10; on limited scope of Tibet Project, 54–55; and U.S. interest in Tibet operation, 53; and weapons drops, 271–72
Hong Xuezhi, 458–59
Hoover, Herbert Jr., 52
horses and mules: bells hung on horses, 311–12; corveé transportation tax, 7, 221, 467; for Dalai Lama escape entourage, 418, 435, 439; Gombo Tashi and theft of, 257, 260. *See also* food and fodder issues
Hoskins, John, 53, 80, 139, 142
Huang Kecheng, 413
Huang Lin, 207, 209
Huang Shaoyang, 327
Hungary, 272

independence of Tibet: campaign for, in India (1956–57), 68; and CIA Tibet Project, 54–55, 93, 147–48, 492; continued hope for, despite overt cooperation with the PRC, 491; Dalai Lama's desire for recognition of, 60–61; de facto, from 1913 to 1951, 20–22, 69, 362; edict from Dalai Lama disavowing activities for (1958), 316–17; emergency assembly and calls for, 391, 399–400, 403, 409, 427–28; human rights vs. political rights as basis of UN case for, 501; Lhasa Uprising and movement for, 360; Mao and the Central Committee's view of, 68–69, 469; Nehru's refusal to accept, 267–68, 270; Qing dynasty and Tibet as loose protectorate under, 22, 29, 69, 491; recognition not forthcoming by international community, 20, 61, 313, 500–502; recognition not forthcoming from India, 20, 61, 267–68, 270, 360. *See also* internal autonomy of local Tibetan government
India: access to, and strategic choices of anti-Chinese resistance, 123, 280, 485; archives of GOI, xvi, 29–30; border with Tibet, 21; British-ruled, and relations with Tibet, xvi, 21; Chinese pressure to constrain anti-Chinese Tibetan resistance in, 152, 215; Chushigandru members fleeing to, 157n17, 481–82, 483; Dalai Lama granted asylum in (1959), 429–30, 477–78, *479*; Dalai Lama visit to (1956–57), and exile considered, xiii, 17–18, 40–45, 47, 48, 49, 60–62, 113, 417, 490–91, 500; English schools in, Tibetan aristocracy and, 21; ethnic Tibetans living in, xivn1; the fall of Chamdo and help sought by Tibet, 24; independence of Tibet announced to by emergency assembly, 399–400, 409; independence of Tibet not recognized by, 20, 61, 267–68, 270, 360; JKTS appeal letter to, 50–51; PRC fear of GOI diplomatic and military relationship with Tibet, 21–22; and proposal to divide Tibet into Front and Back, 194; refusing American support to Tibet via, 102n6, 141, 146, 270; refusing asylum to Dalai Lama (1956), 41–44; refusing Tibetan insurgent activity in, 270; and request for help from the U.S. via Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim, 47–48; and sovereignty of Bhutan, 216–17; Tibetan refugees going to, 407; trade with Tibet, 21; Trapchi Regiment members following the Dalai Lama to, 482, 483. *See also* Indian Consulate (Dekyilinga) (Lhasa); Kalimpong, India; Nehru, Jawaharlal (prime minister)
Indian Consulate (Dekyilinga) (Lhasa), xxviii, 21; awareness of presence of, and Central Committee policy on ending the revolt, 464; on lack of Tibetan battle plan, 454–55; mimang demonstrators asking for help from, 360; permission sought for impending flight of the Dalai Lama, 429–30, 477; and Sambo injury, 359; Tibet independence announced to, 399–400, 409, 427; women's demonstrations (12–13 March 1959), 392

industry and commerce, reform policy on, 467
internal autonomy of local Tibetan government: Kashag intention to preserve, 62, 317; Kashag responsibility for enforcing law and order, 150, 171, 212, 222–23, 329; return of the Dalai Lama from India (1957) and intention of preserving, 62, 113, 115–16, 340, 361, 491; Seventeen-Point Agreement establishing, 25, 26, 212, 316–17, 491, 493. *See also* independence of Tibet; Kashag—under Chinese occupation; Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region; Tibetan government—under Chinese occupation
international community: awareness of, and Central Committee policy on ending the revolt, 405, 464; and emergency assembly's call for independence, 399–400, 427–28; expatriate Tibetans, reform policy and, 467; growing place of Tibet in, and strategic implications for China, 21–22; mimang demonstrators asking for help from, 360; slow and bloody military invasion as strategic risk for Mao in, 23. *See also* independence of Tibet

Jabo, 371, 372, 422, 482
Jagö Namgyal Dorje, 137, 259–60, 276, 277, 278n21, 294–98; and mission to India for weapons, 309–11, 312–14
Jama Ngagdrug, 175, 177, 259, 280, 312
Jama Samphel, 299
Jamba Tseden, 417
Jambey Gyatso, xvii
Jangjenlogo (Jangjenlokho) Lokela, 307, 392
Jangra Lekshe, 477
Jangri Lhagye (Lhagyal), 298, 307, 393
Jangtsa Chöndze, 137, 263, 274; and mission to India for weapons, 309–11, 312–14
Japanese Buddhists, CIA hope for, 147
Jayang Wöser, 274
Jenkhentsisum (JKTS), xxix; appeal letter to many countries and the media, 50–51; Chushigandru abuses reported to, 260–61; continued connection with Dalai Lama, 117–18; Crown Prince of Sikkim association with, 48; and Gombo Tashi, 77n7, 79; Gyalo Thondup and, xxix, 41, 50–51; hope for foreign intervention through, 444; independence of Tibet announced to, 399–400, 427–28; Lobsang Gyentsen and, xxix; and Namseling sending Chushigandru mission to India for weapons support, 311; and Nehru meeting (1958), 267–70; Nehru's awareness of, 152; ordered to return to Tibet or be officially expelled, 152–53; and pan-Tibet insurgency strategy, 95, 135; Phala in secret contact with, 41, 49, 50, 152–53; and pressure on Dalai Lama to seek exile, 41, 62, 116, 417; and secret alliance (1957), 63, 66n105; Shakabpa and, xvi, xxix; as shocked by Nehru's denial of asylum, 42; and talks with U.S. about support, 53; underestimating the difficulty of defeating China militarily, 49–50; U.S. State Department request for meeting with, 51–52; warning to, by GOI, 269. *See also* anti-Chinese resistance; Kalimpong
Jiangbian Jiacuo (Jambey Gyatso), 319–21
Jiangdong. *See* Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture
Jiang Huating (Lobsang Tashi) (Chinese defector), xxix, 130–32, 140, 157n17, 168, 177, 291
Jiang Wenqi, 169–71, 459
Jia Tuofu, 193
Jigje amulets, 114n46, 284
Jigme Dorji, 148n37
Jigyab Khembo, xxix, 13
Jimpa Gyatso, 76n5
Jindag, xxix
Ji Youquan, 288–92, 452
JKTS. *See* Jenkhentsisum
Jogpori Hill, *355*; and Battle for Lhasa, 448, 449, 450, 452, 456, 457–58; instructions to PLA to wait to seize control of, 405; strategic importance of, 405n4; Tibetan defenses of, 409, 443, 445, 446
Jokhang Temple, 76, 236, 370, 446, 454, 475
Jünpa, 347–48

kadrung, 14n22
Kalimpong, India: Chinese perception of Tibetan rebellions as centered in, 413; English schools in, 21; Litang Khambas in, 55–56, 57–59, 74, 88, 95; main route from Lhasa to, map of, *xxxvii*; Namseling and Chushigandru mission for weapons procurement to, 305–6, 309–14; secret alliance between the Kashag and resistance forces in, as short-lived (1957), 63–67; Surkhang's arrangements for his family's escape to, 417; Taktse Rinpoche and John Reagan in, 58. *See also* Jenkhentsisum (JKTS); People's Association (Second) (Kalimpong)
Kalmyk refugees, 87
kalöns, xxix, 14. *See also* Kashag (Council of Ministers)

Kapshöba, 242
Karmapa Lama, 259
Kashag (Council of Ministers), xxix; appointments and promotions of lay officials by, 14; bureaucracy for handling government business, 15; as court of appeals, 14; decision-making process of, 15; Ecclesiastic Office (yigtsang), xxix, xxxiii, 15, 235n64; hypothetical example of recommendations to the Dalai Lama, 15–16; as influence on Dalai Lama (14th), 14, 15, 16–18; kalöns of, xxix, 14; lay/monk officials sharing equal power in, 9–10; lay officials from aristocracy, 10; Ngabö warning about artillery attacks, 424; as only secular office in direct contact with the Dalai Lama, 14, 15, 16; Revenue Office (tsigang), xxxiii, 15–16; seal of (kadam), 16, 435; staff of, 14; Trungja ceremony, 153n6, 226, 342, 357, 359, 397–98. *See also* Tibetan government (Dewashung, Ganden Phodrang); *specific people*
—UNDER CHINESE OCCUPATION: Chinese belief that the Kashag was encouraging and supporting the insurrection, 217–19, 220, 321, 328–29, 341, 373, 402, 423, 469, 495; Chinese instructions to, in wake of 10 March demonstration, 402–3; and the Command Center, 380–82; cordial/cooperative relations with the Chinese as goal of, 28, 33, 36, 153, 222, 335, 339–40, 361–62, 490–91; and decline of invitation to Dalai Lama to attend Second National People's Congress, 322; dismissal of Sitsab, 32–33, 388; escape of the Dalai Lama and, 441; and exile of the Dalai Lama, 415–16; highway disruptions, Chinese demand to order end to, 394–96; internal law and order as responsibility of, 150, 171, 212, 222–23, 329; meeting convened in Calcutta (1957), 62; Nehru visit, 215–17; no knowledge of CIA Tibet Project, 114–15; no knowledge of weapons cache transfer to Chushigandru, 119; and order to JKTS to return to Tibet or be officially expelled, 152–53; People's Association (Kalimpong) recognized by, 62–63; Phala's anti-Chinese activities done without knowledge of, 14, 115, 119, 153, 350; request to send delegation to Beijing for direct discussion (Nov. 1958), 317–22; secret alliance between the resistance forces in India and, as short-lived (1957), 63–67; Sitsab as outranking Kashag, 28–29; slowing reforms as strategy of, 28. *See also* exile of the 14th Dalai Lama—escape in March 1959; internal autonomy of local Tibetan government
—AND CHUSHIGANDRU: ambivalence about presence of, 79, 80, 150–51, 231, 236–37, 243–45, 249; assembly resolution to send a new delegation, 230; Chinese belief of direct Kashag involvement in, 321, 328–29, 469, 495; Chinese blaming, for Phala's activities, 469, 469n8; Chinese pressure on the Dalai Lama to do something about, 79, 212, 215, 218–20, 222–23, 228, 230–31, 493–95; Chinese responsibility for the situation, Tibetan argument for, 212, 218, 228, 230, 328–29, 493; complaints from local Tibetans about mistreatment by Khambas, 228–29, 255, 262; edict disavowing independence activities in Tibet (1958), 316–17; edict for the Khamba to desist and return to their homes (1958), 212–13; edict instructing district heads not to provide any assistance to Chushigandru (1958), 214–15, 253; Shigatse meeting (1958) and public attack by Chinese leader on Kashag, 217–21, 240. *See also* Namseling, Penjor Jigme—Chushigandru delegation sent by assembly and mission of
Kedram (Kelsang Dramdü), xxix, 124, 130–31, 229, 282–83, 284, 285–86, 302; and demonstration of 10 March, 351, 354–55, 370; and emergency assembly meetings, 376; and return of Lobsang Yeshe, 420, 421–22
Kelsang Ngawang, xxx, 113–14, 126–27, 168, 381
Kelsang Yeshi, 284, 285
Kham, 36, 78; as culturally heterogeneous, 74–75; as ethnographic Tibet, xiv; Tibetan government (newly established at Lhüntse) as claiming, 476. *See also* Sichuan Province
Khambas: aptru as category of young tough guys among, 248n16; as armed guards at Norbulinga, 369, 384, 386, 403, 450, 475; Central Tibet (Lhasa) not considered the country/government of, 96; and Chamdo invasion, assistance to the PLA and mistreatment of Tibetan troops by, 242, 243; fleeing to Lhasa, 38, 75, 149, 154, 212, 341, 369, 384, 403–4, 450, 492; and Ganzi Prefecture, xivn2; local areas and chiefs, loyalty to, 74–75, 96, 133; and negative attitude toward Lhasa, 96; and pan-Tibet insurgency strategy, 95–97, 103, 110, 133, 135; rape of women by, 255, 257, 258, 261, 393; robbing and abuse of the miser by, 228–29, 252–62, 264, 293–94, 295–96, 305, 316, 393. *See also* Chushigandru; Litang Khambas; Sichuan Province

khe, 15n24
Kheme Dzasa, 198, 200, 403
Kheme Tsewang Thöndrub, 226n37
Khendrung, 269
khenjung, xxx
Khenjung Changkyim, 228n46, 391–92, 399, 429–30
Khenjung Kelsang Ngawang, xxx, 113–14, 126–27, 168, 381
Khenjung Lama La, 360
Khenjung Lobsang Gyentsen, xxix, 52, 111n35, 269
Khenjung Tara, 345, 346, 347, 364, 381, 403, 440–41, 442, 498
Khenjung Thubden Samjog. *See* Thubden Samjog
Khensur Ngawang Lengden, 344
Khyungpo Tengchen, 266
Knaus, Ken, 55, 91, 278n22
Könchog Rinchen, 387
Kongpo, 255–56, 259–60
Korean Buddhists, CIA hope for, 147
Korean War, 50, 183n8, 193, 202n56, 203
Kripalani, Acharya, 269, 270
Kumbum Monastery, 186, 196
Kunam Dzong, 260
Kundeling Dzasa, xix, 350, 370, 374, 375; and the Command Center, 380–82; in exile entourage, *471*; and exile of the Dalai Lama, 416, 418, 420, 433, 435, 439, 441, 443; on loyalty oath to Tibet, 382; as negative about option to attack the PLA, 443
Kundeling Labrang, 387
Kundeling Tatongwa, 368
Kunga Samden, 294, 298, 307, 393, 421, 422, 435
Kunga Wangdü, 261
kungö, xxx
Künsang la, 377
Kuru bridge, 129, 262
Kuwait, 61
Kyamgön Chandzö, 137, 263

la, xxx
labrang, xxx
Laja Lheding Sey, 381
Laja Tempa, 391, 443
Lake Namtso, 173, 264–65, 484
Lama La, 360
Lamas (incarnate): as regent, 11, 18, 242–43; as uniquely Tibetan institution, 2
land reforms. *See* democratic reforms
Leeker, Joe F., 101n1
Letsen Tenmajog, 347
Lhagang Dzong, 306
Lhagyari: and Chushigandru, 256, 257–58, 260, 264, 273, 274, 295; CIA in, 277–78
Lhagyari Namgyal Gyatso, 456
Lha klu, 377n59
Lhalu, xxx, 14n21, 28, 242, 352, 382, 387–88
Lhalungpa, 267, 268–69
Lhamo divination, 132, 421
Lhamön Yeshe Tsultrim, 216–17
Lhamo Tsering, xxx, 141, 143–45, 312, 480, 482–83, 484–85
Lhapsö Dzong, 255–56, 264
Lharigo, 281
Lhasa: anxiety and fear about democratic reforms in Tibet, 38, 40, 44, 203; armed Khambas fleeing to, 38, 75, 149, 154, 212, 341, 403–4, 450, 492; armed Khambas in, as mimang security guards, 369, 384, 386, 403; dispute with CIA trainee Athar about being sent to, 94–97; map of, *xxxix*; negative attitude toward Khambas, 96, 106; and order for reforms to be carried out, 466; Post Office defenses, 328. *See also* Battle for Lhasa; CIA Tibet Project—mission in Lhasa; end of old Tibet; Indian Consulate (Dekyilinga) (Lhasa); Lhasa Uprising; People's Liberation Army (PLA); Tibetan army; Tibetan government; Tibet Work Committee (TWC)
Lhasa river, crossing by Dalai Lama to exile, 432, 434–35
Lhasa-Shigatse highway (Wuyuk ambush), 169–71
Lhasa Uprising (April 1959), xiii; overview, 496–97, 499–500; alternative responses that could have been considered but weren't, 370–72, 442, 455–56, 493–94, 497–99, 502; anger on both sides in, 446; "big battle" preference of Mao, 406; Central Committee/Mao Zedung instructions regarding, 404–8, 411–15; Chinese belief in imminent attack by Tibetans, 415, 443–45, 495; Chinese narrative of, 462–63; Chinese policy to allow the escape of Dalai Lama, 405, 406–7, 412, 413, 415, 437–38; Chushigandru never contacted to join Lhasa Uprising, 415, 445; defensive military and offensive political positions as Chinese policy in, 404–5, 406–11, 413–15, 445, 446; demonstration of 10 March as morphing into, 357n5, 360–61, 366, 369–70, 475, 496–97; Fan Ming's warning about, 210–11; foreign involvement in, Chinese

Lhasa Uprising *(continued)*
assumption of, 413, 463; and movement for Tibet Independence, 330; number of PLA troops, 445; number of Tibetan forces, Chinese estimates of, 404, 445, 446, 450, 451; propaganda policy of the Chinese, 408, 410; protection of progressives by the Chinese, 383, 395, 404, 410, 422–23, 424–25; as "singdru" in Tibetan, xxxii, 357n5; Tibetan belief in imminent attack by the Chinese, 423–27, 429, 430–31, 435, 495; Tibetan government (newly established at Lhüntse) statement on, 473–76; Tibetan hope for foreign military assistance, 444; Tibetan lack of battle plan, 443–44, 454–55; and Tsetang, 308; TWC reports on, 401–4, 408–11, 415; women's demonstrations, 392, 444. *See also* assemblies, emergency meetings in response to 10 March demonstration; Battle for Lhasa; Chinese Military Headquarters—invitation to Dalai Lama; demonstration of 10 March 1959 at Norbulinga; end of old Tibet; mimang (the people); Qinghai-Lhasa highway disruptions
Lhautara Thubden Tenthar, 226n37, 359–60
Lheding, 379
Lho Dzong, 265–66
Lhogum Sheysung, 228n46
Lhoka: Chinese belief in Kashag support for armed revolt in, 462; Chushigandru relocation to, 123, 128–29; exit path for the Dalai Lama through, Chushigandru responsibility for, 284–85, 293, 297–98, 305, 418, 422; lack of local populace support for Tibetan revolt in, 261; locals robbed and abused by Chushigandru, 228–29, 252–62, 264, 293–94, 295–96, 305, 316, 393; PLA offensive (1959), 480, 481. *See also* Chushigandru—headquartered in Lhoka
Lhorong Dzong, 154, 280n27
Lhüntse Dzong, 128, 264, 419, 440–41; exile of the Dalai Lama and, 115, 473–77
Liang Feng, 206, 207n71, 208, 210
Library of Tibet Works and Archives (Dharamsala, India), xvi
Li Jingquan, xxx, 36–37, 184n9
Li Jue, 208
Lin Boqu, 196
Ling Rinpoche, xxx
Litang Khambas: and plan to force the Dalai Lama to remain in India, 49; as recruits in CIA Tibet Project, 55–60, 74; regiment of Chushigandru, 133; and Taiwan offer of help, 56, 57–58; and traditional local regional identities, 74–75; as unofficial bodyguards of the Dalai Lama, 60. *See also* Chushigandru; CIA Tibet Project—ST CIRCUS; Khambas; Sichuan Province
Litang Monastery, 56
Liu Bocheng, xxx, xxxi, 182–83n5, 193
Liu Guangtong, 154
Liu Shaoqi, xxx, 413, 414
Liushar, xxx, 222, 358, 364, 368, 401, 402, 404; in exile entourage, 442, *442*; and exile of the Dalai Lama, 431; Tan Guansan demand to end highway disruptions, 394–95
Liu Zhaogong, 207
Li Weihan, xxx, 37, 182, 188, 192, 195, 196–97, 198–99, 200, 207
Li Zongqing, 207–8, 209
Li Zuomin, 65, 183, 202–3, 222–23; and cancellation of visit to Chinese Military Headquarters, 366–67; and exile of the Dalai Lama, 436–38; and invitation to the Dalai Lama to Chinese Military Headquarters, 335, 337, 349, 357–58n9, 363; and letter exchange between Tan Guansan and the Dalai Lama, 385, 436
Lobsang Gyentsen, xxix, 52, 111n35, 269
Lobsang Samden (Dalai Lama's brother), xxx
Lobsang Tashi (Chinese defector). *See* Jiang Huating (Lobsang Tashi)
Lobsang Tashi (Tibetan official): appointed Silön by Tibetan government (newly established at Lhüntse), 476; and secrecy of the Dalai Lama's escape, 435; as Sitsab, xxx. *See also* Sitsab
Lobsang Yeshe (Ngawang Senge), 307–8, 392–94, 420–22, 435
Lobsang Yönden, 131
Lodrö Chöndzin, 240–41
Lodrö Kesang, 403
logag (astrologically inauspicious year), 341
Londen, 274
Lonphel Tsültrim, 134, 161–62
lord chamberlain (drönyerchemmo), xxx
Losang Tashi, 456
Loseling College incident (1921), 364
Lotse, xxx; on activities during waiting period to evade Chinese detection, 105–7; and airdrops, 104, 273–77, 278, 470; on Chinese defectors, 139, 140; and dispute over being sent to Lhasa, 96n55, 97; and dispute over nature of CIA training, 88–89, 90, 92, 93; and exile of the Dalai Lama, 472, 479; on

fragmentation and weakening of Chushigandru, 278n21; on length of training, 94n50; moving out of Lhasa with Chushigandru, 133; on parachute training, 98n63; staying in Lhoka during debriefing of Athar, 138–39; warning Gombo Tashi about weapons cache seizure plan, 139–40; and wireless communication and encryption, 84, 138–39, 140. *See also* CIA Tibet Project

Lubu, 239

Lukhangwa (Dekharwa), xxx; and continuing connection of Dalai Lama with anti-Chinese resistance, 117–18; and Nehru meeting (1958), 267–70; order to return to Tibet or be officially expelled, 152–53; and the People's Association, 31; and secret alliance (1957), 63; as Silön of Tibetan government (newly established at Lhüntse), 476; as Sitsab, anti-Chinese policies of, 28–31

Luo Ruiqing, 292

Ma Bufang, xv, 119

McAllister, Edward, 82n23

McCarthy, Roger, 91, 93n47, 94–95, 94n50, 99n65, 272–73, 275, 470n11

Mahakala Temple, 433, 434

Maharaj Kumar. *See* Sikkim Chögyal (Crown Prince) (Maharaj Kumar)

Mahayana Buddism, 2

Manang Abo, 360, 368, 379, 387

manorial estate system (shiga), 6–9; alternatives that could have been taken but weren't, 498–99; aristocratic estates, 6–7, 10; confiscation of estates, 6; continuation of, under Chinese occupation, 36, 224; and Fan Ming opposition to Mao's gradualist policy, 184, 185, 202; flexibility in, 8; government estates, 7; granting of estates, 6; hereditarily bound peasant labor force of (*see* miser); Lhasa Uprising and offers of wealth in order to fight the Chinese, 379, 387, 418; Mao and the Central Committee's view of, 69–70; mass monasticism and income from, 5; monastic estates, 6–7; reform policy of the Central Committee, 466–67, 485–86; reform practice and, 489; as wealth source for elites and government, 9

Mao Zedong: and Battle for Lhasa, 451, 452; "big/decisive battle" preference of, 332; and communes, delay of implementing, 468; and the Dalai Lama, 17–18; and escape into exile of the Dalai Lama, decision to allow, 405, 406–7, 412, 413, 415, 437–38; Fan Ming communication with, 202, 204–5; Lhasa Uprising response by, 405–8, 411–15; military strategy as last-resort alternative (*see* gradualist policy—military solution as last resort under); on miser system in Tibet, 8–9; Panchen Lama (10th) communication with, 187, 188–89; peaceful liberation (Ch. heping jiefang, Tib. shiwei jingdrü) as goal of, 23–25; Socialist Transformation campaign of, 36–38; and strategic goal of "liberation"/ incorporation of Tibet, 21–22, 27; on Tan Guansan's letter to the Dalai Lama, 411. *See also* Anti-Rightist Campaign; Central Committee; democratic reforms; gradualist policy of incorporation of Tibet; People's Liberation Army

maps, *xxxvi–xxxix*

March 10 demonstration. *See* demonstration of 10 March 1959 at Norbulinga

Mashung, 174–77, 281–82

mass monasticism, 1–6; alternatives that could have been taken but weren't, 498–99; as "civilizing project," 1–2; costs of, 5; as deeply conservative, 5–6, 19; definition of, 3; delay in democratic reforms and continuation of, 45, 223–24; destruction of, 485–89; manorial estates, income from, 5; money lending, income from, 5; and the monk official segment of the government, 10–11; percentage of population in, 2; quantity as trumping quality in, 3, 4; recruitment of monks, 3; retention of monks, 3–5; and semiautonomy of monasteries, 4–5; sexuality and monks, 4; superiority of monks over laymen, 2–3; as uniquely Tibetan, 2, 5–6. *See also* Tibetan Buddhism

Maya, 347, 348, 352, 379, 381, 391, 441

media, and JKTS appeal letter, 50–51

memoirs and autobiographies, as sources, xviii–xix

mendredensum, xxx

middle class: People's Association stemming from, 31; as term, 31n23

militias: Chinese, 325–26, 328, 431; local Tibetan, 136, 262, 264, 305–9, 311–12, 314, 392–94, 420–21

mimang (the people): and Chinese use of the term "the people," 31, 384; defined as new term in relation to the miser, 383–84; as

mimang (the people) *(continued)*
emboldened by decision not to use the Tibetan army to disperse, 388–89, 415, 496–97, 498; treatment of, the end of old Tibet and Chinese policy on, 464–65. *See also* demonstration of 10 March 1959 at Norbulinga; miser; People's Association (Second) (Kalimpong); People's Association/Assembly/Party (Mimang Tsondu) (1952)

—GUARD FORCE FOR NORBULINGA: assembly decision for, 379–80, 403; Chinese demand to end disruption of highway as increasing intransigency of, 395–96; demonstration of 10 March, 369, 384, 386, 403; derogatory language used toward Kashag members, 398; Kashag prevented from leaving, 389; mimang armed guards (Khambas), 369, 384, 386, 403, 450, 475; secrecy from, of escape into exile, 416, 418, 429, 433–34, 435; shots fired by, from Potala, 431; vulnerability to artillery attack, 424, 441–42, 456; weapons distributed to, 381, 397–98. *See also* Command Center at Norbulinga

—LEADERSHIP OF: chosen by the mimang, 375; demand for Chinese officials to follow official channels to communicate with the Dalai Lama, 375–76; demand for end to Seventeen-Point Agreement, 370; demand for mimang to become volunteer defense force for Dalai Lama, 369, 379–82; demand for return to Dalai Lama traditional travel, 368–69, 375; demand that the Dalai Lama never visit the Chinese Military Headquarters, 369; as empowered and enabled by Kashag's acceptance of their demands, 369, 372, 374; middle stratum origins of, 384; and moving of the assembly meetings to Shöl, 389; as unprecedented challenge to authority, 369

Mingyiling, 212–13, 229, 234, 240, 376, 442n8

Minyag Abo Yontan, 298

Mipön Shügüpa, 403

miser: advantages to elites of, 9; alternatives that could have been taken but weren't, 498–99; categories of, and differences in standard of living and status, 8–9; Chinese treatment of, 223, 253, 265; Chushigandru/Khamba robbing and abusing of, 228–29, 252–62, 264, 293–94, 295–96, 305, 316, 393; Chushigandru Military Code and concern about treatment of, 134–35, 137; continuation of traditional life for, 253; corvée transportation tax (provision of animals), 7, 221, 467; corvée work obligations of, 6, 7, 8, 202, 466, 467; definition of, xxx–xxxi, 7–8; after democratic reforms were implemented, 258; in dowry, 7; düjung ("small smoke") miser, 8; freedom of individuals within, 8; human lease miser, 9; and land division within estates, 6–7; the lord's right to pursue and forcibly return fleeing persons, 7; Mao Zedong on, 8–9; and mimang, as term, 383; parallel descent, 7, 9; and reform policy of the Central Committee, 466–67; "serfs" as term compared to, 7–8; servant/nangsen miser, 8; taxpayer/treba miser, 8; transfer to other individuals, 7. *See also* manorial estate system; mimang (the people)

monasteries: Chinese policy on protection of, 463–64, 467; funding alternatives, 498–99; policy on reform of, 466–67; reform practices, 486–89; Sichuan uprising and destruction of, 56, 474. *See also* mass monasticism; monks; *specific monasteries*

monasticism. *See* mass monasticism

monks: deaths of, and forced reforms in Sichuan, 56; Drepung Loseling, protest against the 13th Dalai Lama, 364; following the Dalai Lama into exile, 261, 481; reform and treatment policy, 463–64, 466–67; reform practice, 486–89; "runaway," 50. *See also* mass monasticism; *specific monks and monasteries*

mönlam or mönlam chemmo, xxxi

Mönlam Prayer Festival, 336–37, 341, 342, 343–44

Morrison, James, 80n19, 90, 101n1, 278n22

Mullik, Bhola Nath, xxxi, 269

Muru Nyingma, 344

Mu Shengzhong, xxxi, *35*, 67n108, 184, 196, 202–3, 206

Mustakos (CIA trainer), 90

Mustang, Nepal, Chushigandru headquarters in, 279, 484, 485, 500–501

Nagchuka, 73, 119n56, 224–25

Nagtsang Powo, 484

Nakchu, 326

names, romanization conventions for, xix–xx

Namgyal Dorje, 260

Namgyal Wangdü, 306–8, 392–94, 420–22

Namling Dzong, 119, *156*, 164–66

Namseling, Panjor Jigme, xix, xxxi; as adviser to "People's Association," 31, 247; anti-Chinese views, open expression of, 249; and assembly convened on question of mobilizing the Tibetan Army, 226n37, 230; and expulsion of GMD from Lhasa (1949), 247n4; fears of arrest or assassination, 248; Khamba bodyguard of (Dündrül), 248, 250, 251, 262–63; on personality of the Dalai Lama, 12; in Phala's resistance clique, 122, 247, 247n9

—CHUSHIGANDRU DELEGATION SENT BY ASSEMBLY AND MISSION OF: assembly determining to send, 230; covert mission of, as failure, 314; covert mission of, as mediator between Chushigandru and local Tibetans, 250–53, 262; Dalai Lama on, 246, 248, 251–53; as distrusted by the Khambas, 262–64, 308–10, 314, 472n14; edict to desist and return to Sichuan, 263; food and fodder, Khambas robbing and abusing local Tibetans to procure, 252–62, 305; and Gombo Tashi, relationship with, 79, 122–23, 124, 136, 247–48, 249, 252, 263, 308, 311; on lack of defenses at Lhoka headquarters, 263–64, 481; members of, 246–47; and militias of local Tibetans, 262, 264, 305–6, 308–9, 314, 393; Namseling's ostensible reason for being chosen for, 249–50; Phala and, 252, 262, 263, 264; status as Tibetan official and, 252; weapons procurement delegation sent to Kalimpong, 305–6, 309–14; wife and family left behind, 250–51

Nangkartse, 221, 298

Nangmagang (Private Secretary's Office), xxxi, 13n18

Narkyid, Ngawang Thondrup, 348, 351

National Assemblies. *See* assemblies (tsondu) (National Assemblies)

National People's Congress (NPC) (of PRC): Dalai Lama agreement to become vice-chairman of Standing Committee of, 35–36, 320, 321; First, Dalai Lama attendance at, 34; Second, invitation to Dalai Lama to attend, 319–22, 406, 423, 499

National Security Agency (NSA), xvi

National Security Council (NSC), 45–46

Nechung divinations, 344–45, 396, 419–20, 431–32

NEFA (Northeast Frontier Agency) (India), xxxi

Nehru, Jawaharlal (prime minister), xiii, 62, 117; awareness of anti-Chinese Tibetan activism in India, 152; on Bhutan, 216–17; caution against military confrontation and advice to work within the PRC, 42–43, 44, 62, 64, 115, 268, 361, 491; Dalai Lama granted asylum by (1959), 477–78; Dalai Lama refused asylum by (1956), 41–44; on Lhasa Uprising, 360; Mao on policy of, 406; meeting with JKTS and refusal to support the Tibetan cause, 167–70; negative views of traditional system of Tibet, 42–43, 267–68; "Selected Works of Nehru," xvi; visit to Tibet, 215–17, *216*; on women's demonstration, 392

Nepal: border with Tibet, 21; ethnic Tibetans in, xivn1; the fall of Chamdo and help sought by Tibet, 24; independence of Tibet announced by emergency assembly, 399–400; Lhasa consulate of, and Central Committee policy on ending the revolt, 464; Mustang headquarters of Chushigandru, 279, 484, 485, 500–501; and proposal to divide Tibet into Front and Back, 194; Tibetan refugees going to, 407

new society (jitso sarpa). *See* end of old Tibet

Ngabö, xvii, xxxi, 14n21; advice not to fight the Chinese, 390; on alternatives that could have been taken but weren't, 498–99; and Beijing meeting (1951) for negotiations on Panchen Lama, 196n44, 198–201; and Central Committee response to edict disavowing independence, 317; and Chushigandru, 79, 231; on the Cultural Revolution, 498–99; and demonstration of 10 March, 373, 404; and dismissal of Sitsab, 33; and exchange of letters between Tan Guansan and the Dalai Lama, 385, 386; and exile decision of Dalai Lama, 61, 420, 423–24; and exile of the Dalai Lama, 436; and fall of Chamdo Province, 24; in favor of mobilizing Tibetan army against Chushigandru, 225, 228; on forced land reforms in Sichuan, 37; and invitation to the Dalai Lama to Chinese Military Headquarters, 349, 359n16, 364–65; letter from the Kashag (17 March), 428–29, 430; letter to the Dalai Lama (15 March), 423–24, 425; PLA protection for, 383, 395, 404; as PLA vice-commander, 237; and the Reform Office, 499n9; and reform policy, 468; on retaining Tibet's autonomy, 28

Ngadang. *See* Gyantse Regiment

Ngagpa Khembo, 212

Ngawang Chömphel, 347, 348

Ngawang Senge (Lobsang Yeshe), 307–8, 392–94, 420–22, 435

Ngawang Yönten, 298

Norbulinga (Dalai Lama's Summer Palace), xiii; Battle for Lhasa and artillery attack by PLA, 449–50, 454–56, 476–77; belief that

Norbulinga (Dalai Lama's Summer Palace) *(continued)*
  the Chinese were about to shell, 423–27, 429, 430–31, 435; defenses reinforced in, 409, 427; documents captured from, 458; great procession with palanquin to, 337; layout of grounds of (outer wall and yellow inner wall), 355–56, 426; Tibetan forces guarding, 443, 445, 446, 450, 475; unauthorized shelling of, 430–31, 459, 475. *See also* Command Center at Norbulinga; demonstration of 10 March 1959 at Norbulinga; mimang (the people)—guard force for Norbulinga
Norling Bodyguard Command Center. *See* Command Center
Norsang, 403
Northwest Bureau (NWB) (Ch. xibei ju) (First Field Army), xxxi, 29; and leadership in TWC, 184; and the Panchen Lama (10th), 186, 187–88, 189, 190, 192–96, 201–2; as power in Tibet, 183n8; regional organization of, 182–83n5; Tibet Work Committee of (Ch. xizang gongwei), 193, 195–96. *See also* Fan Ming; People's Liberation Army (PLA)
Noryon lama, 486, 488
NPC. *See* National People's Congress (of PRC)
NSA. *See* National Security Agency (NSA)
Numa, 455
Nyarong, 75
Nyemo ambush (first), 156–57, 160–64, 168, 213–14, 259, 417
Nyemo ambush (second), 168–73, 481
Nyetang, 421
Nyintri, 298

Okinawa, CIA training on, 98, 483
"old society" replaced with "new society," xiii, 28, 267–68, 469, 485–89, 497. *See also* end of old Tibet
oral history data, xvii–xviii
"Oxtail Hill," 446–47

Pakistan: hopes for recognition of Tibet independence by, 61; JKTS appeal letter to, 50–51. *See also* East Pakistan
Palden Gyatso, 359
Palden Lhamo, 78
Panchen Lama (5th), 190
Panchen Lama (9th): conflict with the 13th Dalai Lama and exile to China, 185, 186, 199–201; death of, 185; GMD government support for, 185
Panchen Lama (10th): administration of, and Nehru visit/Shigatse meeting, 216, 217; and Beijing meeting (1951), 196–201; CCP and the fine line between supporting, vs. the Dalai Lama, 188, 192, 196–97; and CCP investigation of history of conflict with the Dalai Lama, 188, 192; Dalai Lama (13th), nonrecognition of, 185–86, 197–99; Dalai Lama (13th), recognition of, 192, 199, 201; in exile in China, 185–86; and Fan Ming's plan to divide Tibet, 34, 184–85, 189, 192–93, 194, 195–97, 199n49, 201–2, 203, 209–10; Front/Back Tibet as never real on the ground, 189n21, 194; Front/Back Tibet used as rationale to argue for equal political status with the Dalai Lama, 189, 190, 192–97, 200, 202; and GMD government recognition, 186; and NWB, relationship with, 186, 187–88, 189, 190, 192–96, 201–2; PRC recognition of, 194, 197; proposal to Mao Zedong ("A Plan Concerning the Liberation of Tibet and the Organization of the Government"), 190–92; recognition by Qinghai-based officials of late Panchen Lama, 185–86; and reform policy, 466, 468; reforms, pressuring for, 41; return to Tibet of, 192, 195, 197, 199–202; shift of allegiance to the PRC and liberation of Tibet, 186–89, 190, 194
Panchen's Bureau Office (Nanjing), 185
Panmunjom, 202
pan-Tibet insurgency strategy, 95–97, 103, 110, 133, 135; and pan-Tibetan national identity, 135
pastoral areas, reform policy on, 467
PCTAR. *See* Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region
peaceful liberation (Ch. heping jiefang, Tib. shiwei jingdrü), 23–25
peasants. *See* miser
Pemakö, 485
Pembar Dzong, 177–78, 257, 265–67, 280, 484, 493
Peng Dehuai, xxxi, 183n8; and Battle for Lhasa, 451; and Fan Ming, 193, 203, 207; and merging of Tibetan army with PLA, 238; and the Panchen Lama, 186, 187–88, 190; on second Tsetang battle, 304
People's Assembly/Conference (March 1959). *See* assemblies, emergency meetings in response to demonstration of 10 March

People's Association (Second, 1956), 62–63, 66, 76, 384; banning of, 75, 369
People's Association/Assembly/Party (Mimang Tsondu) (1952): banning of, 369; formation of, 30–31; former members of, and 10 March demonstration, 360, 384; name of, 30n22, 31, 384; Namseling as adviser to, 31, 247; petition for removal of occupying troops from Lhasa, 31, 32, 247, 358; Phala and, 351; and the Sitsab, support for, 31, 32, 358
People's Congress of the Independent State of Tibet, 399–400, 427–28. *See also* assemblies, emergency meetings in response to 10 March demonstration
People's Liberation Army (PLA): overview, 29; anti-Chinese activities and, 32; armored vehicles, 325, 445; battle plan developed by, 448; capture of American weapons from Chiang Kai-shek, 22, 222; and Chinese Civil War, 20; defectors from, 130–32, 139–40, 156–57, 157n17, 160, 168, 177, 291; difficulty of provisioning, 29–30; division of Tibet into battle zones and systematic clearance of rebels in, 485–86, 489; downsizing of presence in Tibet, 73, 157, 331–32, 469; and economic hardships on residents of Lhasa, 30; and Gonggar Ambush (December 1958), 286, 287–93, 328, 341; and invitation to the Dalai Lama to visit Chinese Military Headquarters, 357–58n9, 363; Lhoka offensive of, 480, 481; merging of Tibetan army into, 30, 35, 237–39; morale problems of, 157–60; non-presence in Shotalhosum when Gombo Tashi arrived, 265–66; numbers in Lhasa, 445; PCTAR workers guarded by, 383; possession of Qinghai/Gansu region, xv; Powo Tramog campaign, 267, 279–81, 298–99, 481; regional organization of, 182–83n5; reinforcement troops for, 413–14, 445, 451, 452–53, 454, 456, 480; rumor of capture of Gombo Tashi, 285; struggle sessions conducted by, 487–88; treatment of captured and surrendered Tibetans after Battle for Lhasa, 314, 353n97, 435n71, 456–57, 457, 463, 467–68; treatment of defeated Tibetan army soldiers after Chamdo, 243n83; treatment of miser, 223, 253, 265; treatment of monks, 486–89; Tsetang attacks (*see* Tsetang). *See also* anti-Chinese resistance—underestimating the difficulty of defeating China militarily; artillery attack; Battle for Lhasa; Central Military Commission (Beijing); Chamdo Province; Chinese Military Headquarters (Lhasa); Lhasa Uprising; Northwest Bureau (NWB) (Ch. xibei ju) (First Field Army); Sichuan Province; Southwest Bureau (SWB) (Ch. xinan ju) (Second Field Army)
—DEFENSIVE STRATEGY ORDERED FOR: and Chushigandru, 129–30, 149–50, 154, 160, 164, 179–80, 305, 481; fortifications on buildings and compounds built by, 32, 227, 231–32, 234, 283, 292–93, 325, 326–27, 341, 495; and full-scale vs. localized revolts, 323–25, 331–35, 411, 412, 465, 495–96; Lhasa Uprising and, 404–5, 406–11, 413–15, 445, 446; offensive strategies allowed under special circumstances, 149–50, 154–55, 323–25 (*see also* Shang Ganden Chöngor government weapons cache seizure by Gombo Tashi); offensive strategies as last resort (*see* gradualist policy of incorporation of Tibet—military solution as last resort under); and Sichuan uprising, intention to avoid repeating, 44, 68, 115, 179, 493; Tibetan misunderstanding of, as Chinese intent to attack, 231–32, 234, 341–42, 423–27, 426–27, 429, 430–31, 435, 495; winning over Tibetans, instructions for, 27–28, 129–30, 328–29
People's Republic of China (PRC): Cold War strategy of U.S. to contain, 45, 46–47, 52, 54, 271–72, 481, 492, 502; communist/atheist ideology of, and negative opinion of Tibetans, 21, 24; dayan silver coins of, xxviii, 36, 223, 253; DPRC (Documents from the People's Republic of China), xvi; "Eastern March of Buddhism" to, 2n2; formation of, 20; minority populations in (*see specific minorities and regions*); process of Tibetan government for dealing with, 16, 17; Socialist Transformation Campaign, 36–37, 39. *See also* anti-Chinese resistance; Anti-Rightist Campaign; Central Committee; Chinese Communist Party; Cultural Revolution; National People's Congress; People's Liberation Army; Tibet Work Committee (TWC); *names of people and places*
People's volunteer military command center. *See* Command Center
periodicals, as source, xix
Phagpalha Khenjung, murder of. *See* Sonam Gyatso (Chamdo Khenjung)
Phagpalha Rinpoche, 359, 401, 466

Phala, Thubden Wönden, xxxi, 11; and Chinese defectors, 131–32; and the emergency assembly, 388, 389; in exile entourage, 433, 434, 442, 470, *471*, 472, *472*, 477–79; exile of the Dalai Lama, pressure for, 390, 416–17, 499–500; exile organization falling to Phala, 415–16 (*see also* exile of the 14th Dalai Lama––escape of March 1959); for fighting vs. talking with the Chinese at the emergency assembly, 388; influence on the Dalai Lama, 13, 41, 350; and invitation to the Dalai Lama to Chinese Military Headquarters, 338, 339, 342, 345–46, 496; letter exchange between Dalai Lama and Tan Guansan, messenger cautioned to avoid Phala, 385; residence at Norbulinga, 356; safety of Dalai Lama as paramount concern of, 114–15, 118–19, 153, 284–85, 322, 350–51; Tan Guansan demand to end highway disruptions, 394–95; and unauthorized assembly meeting, 234–35. *See also* Secretariat Office of the Dalai Lama

—COVERT ANTI-CHINESE ACTIVITIES OF: overview, 14, 350–51; Chinese belief that the actions of Phala were the actions of the Kashag, 469, 469n8; and Chushigandru moving out of Lhasa, 122–23, 136; as CIA contact via Taktse Rinpoche, 58, 60n94; and the CIA Tibet Project, 108, 110–18, 126–27, 143, 271; and Crown Prince of Sikkim request for help to U.S., 48–49; and demonstration of 10 March, 356–57; demonstration of 10 March as incited by, 350–53, 366, 498; and dual strategy of the Dalai Lama, 117–18, 153, 491–92; Gombo Tashi relationship, 79, 247–48, 252; and Gonggar ambush, 286, 341; and Jenkhentsisum, 41, 49, 50, 152–53; Kashag not consulted about, 14, 115, 119, 153, 350; and militias of local Tibetans, 262; Namseling in resistance clique of, 252, 262, 263, 264; and pan-Tibet insurgency strategy, 95; pressure on Dalai Lama to stay in India (1957), 49, 62, 116, 351; pressure on Dalai Lama to stay in Yadong (1950–51), 26, 351, 416–17; and rumor of Chinese capture of Gombo Tashi, 285; secret alliance (1957), 63; underestimating the difficulty of defeating China militarily, 49–50; weapons cache in Lhasa, refusal to allow access to, 305; weapons cache seizure by Chushigandru, 119, 121, 136, 137, 166–67

Phari, 430
Phembo, 282, 283, 285
Phembo Tsöra Chemmo, 286
Phu Dündül Chöying, 257, 265–66, 280, 281
Phuma Rignam, 296
Phundra, 468
Phünkang Lhajam, xxxii, 52, 52–53
Phüntso Gyatso, 107
Phüntso Tashi Taklha. *See* Taklha Phuntso Tashi
Phüntso Wangye, xvii, xxxii, 149, 194
Phüntso Yügye, 357, 368, 377, 379, 390–91
Phünwang, xxxii, 200
Phurba Trinley, 165, 259
PLA. *See* People's Liberation Army (PLA)
Politburo: meetings on Lhasa Uprising, 413–14; as source of Central Committee directives, 38n36
political officer in Sikkim (POS), xxxii, 269
political Tibet. *See* Tibet
Potala Palace: and Battle for Lhasa, 454, 456, 476–77; shots fired by mimang guards, 431; Tibetan defenses of, 409, 443, 445, 446, 475

—GOVERNMENT ARSENAL IN, 119, 249, 283, 284; distribution following demonstration of 10 March, 381, 445; distribution to Lobsang Yeshe for Chushigandru, 422; distribution to mimang guards, 381, 397–98; Phala refusing weapon distribution to Chushigandru, 305

Powo (Tramog) campaign, 267, 279–81, 298–99, 481
PRC. *See* People's Republic of China
Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region (PCTAR): the Dalai Lama as Chairman of, 36; delay of reforms as issue for, 68; downsizing of, and "Great Contraction," 72; emergency assembly members working for, and loyalty oath, 382–83; established as the new government (28 March 1959), 468–69; formation of, 36; Kashag officials ordered to work for, 227n40, 362, 382; Panchen Lama as new acting Chairman of, 469; and Tibetan army wearing Chinese uniforms for special occasions, 238; travel of Dalai Lama to meetings for, 337–38

Qiao Xueting, 160, 289, 290, 292
Qing Dynasty: fall of, 20, 22; and Front/Back Tibet, 189, 202; Tibet as loose protectorate under, 22, 29, 69, 491
Qinghai-Lhasa highway disruptions: mimang and, 394–97, 409, 415; Tibetan army shots fired near, 396–97; Transportation Station, unauthorized shelling from, 430–31, 459, 475
Qinghai Liaison Office, 188

Qinghai Province: and Battle for Lhasa, 451; cadres appointed from, 468; Chinese belief of Kashag involvement in rebellion in, 462; and Chushigandru membership, 79, 136; ethnographic Tibet and, xiv, xv; and Panchen Lama, 185–86, 188, 189; PLA quelling major revolt in (1958), 323; PLA taking from GMD (1949), xv; and World War II, 119n56
Qin Shihuang, 182
Qi Xue, 301

Radhakhrisnan, Sarvepalli, 215
Radru Ngawang, xxxii; and attacks on Tsetang, 285–93; on battle organization of Chushigandru, 161; on Chinese defectors, 132; and Chushigandru moving out of Lhasa, 125, 128, 129–30, 132–33; and the Dalai Lama's safety, as paramount concern, 283–85, 293, 295, 297–98; and Derge regiment feud with Central Command, 294–98; disguises himself as a Sera monk before going to Lhasa (1958), 282; and divinations, 282, 286, 298; on food and fodder issues, Khamba abuses of local Tibetans to procure, 254–55, 264, 293–94, 295–96; on foreign training, issue of, 88; as general of right wing regiment of Chushigandru, 134; on Khamba anger at Kashag edict, 213; on lack of CIA weapons airdrops, 103; and lack of military discipline in absence of Gombo Tashi, 137, 293, 305; on Lhasa mission of CIA Tibet Project, 108, 111, 127; on local rural militias, 136; on naming of Chushigandru, 78; on Namseling sending mission to India for weapons, 309–10; on oath-taking ceremony of Chushigandru, 123–24; on opening ceremony of Chushigandru headquarters, 135; regiment formation from Gombo Tashi fighter remnants, 282, 283, 293, 308, 394 (*see also* Gonggar Ambush); on religious activities as pretext for political organizing, 76; and search for Gombo Tashi, 282–83; tactical plan for keeping Lhoka free of the PLA, 293, 294, 296, 297–98; and Tsetang attack, 298, 299, 303; and weapons cache seizure at Shang, 137, 162–66, 167–68, 169, 172, 173–77, 281–82; and weapons, plan to procure, 283, 284–85
Ragashag, Phüntso Rabgye, xxxii, 14n21; as PLA vice-commander, 237; and secret alliance (1957), 63, 65–66; and secret training of local Tibetan militias, 307, 393. *See also* Gyantse Regiment
Ramagang ferry site, Battle of Lhasa beginning with incident at, 446–48
Ramba (monk official kalön), 14n21
Ramba family, 11
Ramba Theji, 228n46
Ramoche, 450, 454
Rani Chuni (Chöying Wangmo) Dorji, 148n37
Ratö Rinpoche, 432
Reagan, John (CIA officer), xxxii; appointment of, 53; on Cold War objectives, 54; and exfiltration of trainees, 81n22, 82n25; independence of Tibet not a goal of CIA, 54; introduced by Taktse Rinpoche to Gyalo Thondup, 41n39, 58; on Lhasa mission of Tibet Project, 109; ST CIRCUS, 54
Reams, R. Borden, 47–48, 51–52
Rectification campaign, 181. *See also* Anti-Rightist Campaign
reforms. *See* democratic reforms
regent for the Dalai Lama, 11, 18, 242–43
religion. *See* Tibetan Buddhism
Republic of China (1911–1949): de facto independence of Tibet under, 20–22, 69, 362; and Xikang Province, xivn2
Republic of China (Taiwan). *See* Taiwan
Resur Rimpoche, 487
Reting, 264–65
Reting Monastery, 173–77
Reting Rinpoche, 18, 242–43
Revenue Office (tsigang), xxxiii, 15–16
Richardson, Hugh, xiv
Rinchengang (Chinese checkpoint), 141, 148
romanization conventions, xix–xx
Rowland, John, 55, 492
rupön, xxxii

Sagadawa, 129
Saipan Island, CIA Tibet Project training on, 82
Salungpa, 360
Sambo (Tsewang Rinzin), 79, 121, 198–99, 200, 232, 238, 359; attacked and injured by the crowd at 10 March demonstration, 358–59, 365, 367, 374, 401, 415
Samjog. *See* Thubden Samjog
Samye Monastery, 101, 104, 105, 108, 298
Sandu Lo Nyendra, and mission to India for weapons, 309–11, 312–14
Sandu Rinchen, 198
Sarchung Sey, 228n46
Sateng Dzong, 177–78, 179, 265
Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–45), 20

Secretariat Office of the Dalai Lama: demonstration of 10 March as instigated by officials of, 340, 343, 346–50, 366, 369, 496, 498; escape of the Dalai Lama and, 441; as information source/influence on the Dalai Lama, 13–14; lord chamberlain as head of, 13; Nangmagang (Private Secretary's Office), xxxi, 13n18; Shukja Tsendrön, 342n64; Singga (guards), 13n18; tsendrön (aides to lord chamberlain), 13. *See also* Phala, Thubden Wönden

senriy. *See* divine lottery

Sera Monastery, xxxiii, 223–24, 246n3, 249, 261, 283, 403; and assemblies (tsondu) (National Assemblies), 18–19, 30n21, 228n46, 403; geshe exam of Dalai Lama, 342; Radru Ngawang disguises himself as a Sera monk before going to Lhasa (1958), 282; Sera Je College monastic disturbance (1947), 242–43

serfs, as term, 7–8. *See also* miser

Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Liberation of Tibet (1951), xiii; acceptance of Chinese sovereignty and occupation of Tibet, 25, 26–27, 29, 362, 417, 462; currency of Tibet, end of, 35, 36; delay of democratic reforms in, 24–26; dismissal of the Sitsab and reaffirmation of, 33; edict from Dalai Lama disavowing independence activities viewed as violation of (1958), 316–17; emergency Tibetan Assembly and rejection of, 383, 399; ethnographic Tibet not included in, xv; internal autonomy for local Tibetan government, 25, 26, 212, 316–17, 491, 493; Military-Administrative Committee, 30, 35, 237; mimang demonstration and demand for end to, 370; National Assembly and, 30n21; Nehru's advice to assert the Dalai Lama's rights under, 42–43, 44, 62, 64, 268, 361, 491; and the Panchen Lama, 199, 200–201; peaceful liberation as goal of, 24–25; PLA not to be used for internal governance, 493; PLA to be assisted getting provisions, 29; pressure on the Dalai Lama to reject, 416–17; return from India and intention of Dalai Lama to preserve internal autonomy, 62, 113, 115–16, 340, 361, 491; secret codicil of, 237; signing of, 24; Sitsab intention to renegotiate, 29; Tibetan Army to be merged into the PLA, 30, 35, 237. *See also* gradualist policy of incorporation of Tibet

Sexin (Seshing), 230, 232, 233

Seysey, 263, 298, 302

Shakabpa, xxxii; independence of Tibet announced to, 427–28; introduced to John Reagan, 58; and Jenkhentsisum (JKTS), xvi, xxix; on JKTS meetings with Nehru and Foreign Minister Dutt, 269–70; letter from Dalai Lama to Lukhangwa, 117–18; letter to Shelkar dzongpön to give weapons cache to Khambas, 240n78; on Lhasa mission of CIA Tibet Project, 110n31, 111n35; order to return to Tibet or be officially expelled, 152–53; printing pamphlets about secret alliance (1957), 66; as source for text, xvi; on support operations by U.S., 52–53; and Tsarong Dzasa, approach to lead, 313–14; on underestimation of difficulty of defeating China militarily, 49–50; on U.S. interest in assisting Tibet, 50, 51

Shalotsang Chöndze, 281–82, 283, 285

Shalu Monastery, reforms and, 486–89, 497

Shang Ganden Chöngor Monastery, xxxii, *156*

Shang Ganden Chöngor government weapons cache seizure by Gombo Tashi: overview, 492–93; and Chinese anger at Kashag, 217; Chinese army defectors accompanying, 139–40, 156–57, 160, 168; Chushigandru movement from Lhasa and postponement of, 122; CIA debriefing of Athar and discussion of, 144; Dalai Lama's hypothetical discussion about, 119–21; Dalai Lama's reaction to, 213–14; and defensive strategy of PLA, 179–80; doubts about plan for, 139–40; Drigung Lungshö ambush, 174; food and fodder issues during, 257, 266; inner circle doubts about plan for, 137, 140, 156, 293; inventory of items taken, 168; Khamba instructions to evade and avoid fights with PLA, 136–37, 155; map of battles, *xxxvi*; Mashung ambush, 174–77, 281–82; Namseling and open support for, 249; Nyemo ambush (first), 156–57, 160–64, 168, 213–14, 259, 417; Nyemo ambush (second), 168–73, 481; Phala's help with, 119, 121, 136, 137, 166–67; and PLA comments on Chushigandru, 178–79; plan for, 136–37, 139–40; plan for return from Shang, 168; Reting Monastery ambush, 173; seizure of weapons without firing a shot, 164–68, 217, 240; splitting of forces, 155; total casualties for Chushigandru, 178; Wuyuk ambush of convoy at, 169–71, 217, 228, 292. *See also* Gombo Tashi—stranded in Shotalhosum

Shannan. *See* Lhoka

Shape, xxxii

Sharlotsang Chöndze, 176–77

Shasur (Shenkawa), xxxii, 14, 33, 358, 364, 368, 373–74, 401, 402; in exile entourage, 442, *442*; and exile of the Dalai Lama, 429, 431; Tan Guansan demand to end highway disruptions, 394–95

Shatra, 242, 263–64, 382–83

Shelkar Dzong weapons cache, 166, 240–42

Shelling, Tsewang Namgyal, xviii

Shen Fenglou, 290

shengo, xxxii, 131, 241, 307, 371, 393, 422

Shenkhawa, 348

Shigatse: Chinese militia formed in, 326; expulsion of Blue Chinese from, 121–22; and Kashag edict to district heads not to aid Chushigandru, 215

Shigatse (Gadang) Regiment: protection of Shelkar arms cache from Chushigandru, 166, 240–42; surrender of, 455

Shigatse meeting (1958), 217–20, 240

shöba, 14n22

Shöl, 389n89

Shöl Parkhang, assembly meetings moved to, 388–89

Shölpa Tatonga, 387–88

Shopando Dzong, 178n64, 265, 266

Shopashar, 274

Shöpa Tatongpa (Shölpa Tsültrim Nyimala), 228n46, 229

Shotalhosum. *See* Gombo Tashi—stranded in Shotalhosum

Shügüpa, 381

Shungden divinations, 286, 432; Gombo Tashi and, 78, 124–26, 132, 168, 174–75; worship banned in exile, 432n66

Sichuan-Lhasa highway, ambushes on, 154–55, 327

Sichuan Province, xiv, xxxiv; and Battle for Lhasa, 451; boundary of political Tibet and, xv; cadres appointed from, 468; and Chushigandru membership, 79; return of Khambas to, Chinese guarantees for, 213, 493

—UPRISINGS AGAINST FORCED DEMOCRATIC REFORMS IN SICHUAN: and anxiety in Lhasa, 38, 40, 44, 203; as cause of Khamba presence in Tibet, and Kashag argument for China to deal with Chushigandru, 212, 218, 228, 230, 328–29, 493–94; Chinese belief in Kashag support for, 462; as CIA opportunity, 46–47, 51; Khamba fighters fleeing to Lhasa from, 38, 75, 149, 154, 212, 341, 369, 384, 403–4, 450, 492; Khamba revolts and PLA response, 37–38, 56; lack of internal organization and unity in, 74; major PLA push to end (1958), 322–23; Mao as wishing to avoid mistakes made in, 44, 68, 115, 179, 493; and pan-Tibet insurgency strategy, 95–97, 103, 110, 133, 135; Socialist Transformation campaign and faux approval of minority elites in, 36–37, 39; and urgency of Khamba desire for weapons and ammunition, 88, 93, 136

Sidar, 356

Sikkim, 47n57; Apa Pant (POS), xxvii, 66n105, 267; political officer in (POS), xxxii, 269; royal family of, and Surkhang's family escape, 417

Sikkim Chögyal (Crown Prince) (Maharaj Kumar), xxx, 41, 47–49, 51–52, 53, 103, 113

Silön: creation of, 18. *See also* Sitsab (acting prime ministers)

Simbö Khembo, 442

Sinde Nara, 259

singdru, xxxii, 357n5

Singga (guards), 13n18

Sinha, S., 29–30

Sino-Indian War (1962), 485, 492

Sitsab (acting prime ministers): anti-Chinese hostility of, 29–31, 32, 217n14, 358; appointed as Silön of Tibetan government (newly established at Lhüntse), 476; appointment by 14th Dalai Lama, xxxii, 18, 28; dismissal by 14th Dalai Lama, 32–33, 388n86; and exile of the Dalai Lama, 435; as outranking Kashag, 28–29; People's Association support for, 31, 32, 358

Society for the Cause of Tibetan Welfare, 427–28

Sonam Gombo, 274

Sonam Gyatso (Chamdo Khenjung), murder of, 359–60, 365, 367, 369–70, 386, 401, 415, 455

Sonam Phüntso, 285

Sonam Tomden, 107

Sonam Tsering, 287

Song Zhiyuan, 200, 201

Sopel, 369–70

Söpön Khembo, 12

sources for text, xvi–xix; contradictions in, evaluation of, xviii

Southwest Bureau (SWB) (Ch. xinan ju) (Second Field Army), xxxi, 29; and Front/Back Tibet rationale for installing autonomous Panchen Lama, 192, 194–95, 196–97, 202; regional organization of, 182–83n5. *See also* People's Liberation Army (PLA); Zhang Guohua

Soviet Union: Cold War policy for covert operations opposing, 46; downing U-2 spy plane, 484
ST BARNUM (aerial part of CIA's covert operation), 99–100, 101–3, 104
ST CIRCUS. *See* CIA Tibet Project—ST CIRCUS
struggle sessions, 25, 258; narrative of, 486–89
Sun Diancai, xxxiv, 67n108, 184, 195–96
Sun Gong, 193
Sun Yat-sen, 20
Sun Yijun, 195–96
Surkhang, xxxiii, 14n21, 15n23, 17; and arrest of Reting Rinpoche, 242–43; and assembly meeting (1958), 226, 227–28, 233, 242; Chinese belief he was actively backing the rebels, as erroneous, 469n8; and demonstration of 10 March, 358, 364, 367–68, 370, 372, 373, 401, 402; and emergency assembly (1959), 403; and exchange of letters between Tan Guansan and the Dalai Lama, 387n82; in exile entourage, 442, *442*, *472*, 472n14, *474*; and exile of Dalai Lama, 390, 416–17, 418, 431, 435, 499–500; and incitement of March 10 demonstration, 348; and Kalimpong, arrangements for his family's escape to, 417; and Nehru visit, 216; pressure on Dalai Lama to stay in India (1957), 62; protection of Shelkar Dzong weapons cache, 166, 240, 241–42; on recognition of the People's Association, 62; on return of Dalai Lama to Lhasa (1957), 62; and secret alliance (1957), 63, 66; Shigatse meeting (1958), 217–20, 240, 366; on the strength of Khamba local regional identity, 75; and Tan Guansan demand to end highway disruptions, 394–95
Surkhang Khenjung (younger brother of Surkhang), 417
Surshi lama, 486

Taiwan (Republic of China): agreement to help Tibetan resistance, 58, 59–60, 88, 95; Chinese assumption of involvement in anti-Chinese resistance, 151, 152, 153; contact with agents of, as goal of Litang Khambas, 56, 57–58; hope for weapons procurement from (January 1959), 305–6, 309–10, 311, 312
Takdruka, 172
Taklha, Phüntso Tashi, xvii, xxxiii, 197–98, 199n50, 283; and demonstration of 10 March, 352, 356–57, 371; in exile entourage, 433, 434, 442; and exile of the Dalai Lama, 41; and invitation to the Dalai Lama to Chinese Military Headquarters, 338–39, 345, 346, 347
Taktse Rinpoche (Dalai Lama's brother), xiii, xxxiii, 18; as CIA adviser, 58, 93n47, 96; CIA led to believe that the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government were committed to fighting against the Chinese, 96, 103, 113; and CIA Saipan trainees, 81, 82n26, 87, 94, 95–97; collecting information from Litang Khamba recruits, 60; introducing John Reagan (CIA) to Gyalo Thondup, 41n39, 58; pressure on Dalai Lama to enter exile, 61, 62; and report of U.S. interest in assisting, 50
Ta Lama Jawtang, 377, *378*, 379, 388, 397–98, 403; in exile entourage, 442, *442*
Ta lama Rongnamse Thubden Norsang, 226n37
Tamdrin, 261
Tan Guansan, xxxiii, *35*; alternatives that could have been taken but weren't, 455–56; on the assembly's draft resolution, 230; and Battle for Lhasa, 446–48, 450–52, 454, 455–56; and Battle for Lhasa, investigation into actions of, 457–60; and Dalai Lama visit to Chinese Military Headquarters, cancellation of, 367; and Dalai Lama visit to Chinese Military Headquarters, invitation to, 321–22, 349, 363; demand that Kashag/Dalai Lama mobilize Tibetan Army against Chushigandru, 223; and exile of the Dalai Lama, 436–37, 438; and Front/Back Tibet rationale for installing autonomous Panchen Lama, 194–95, 202; instructions to the Kashag in wake of 10 March demonstration, 402–3; kalöns' meeting with, about the demonstration of 10 March, 373–74, 402–3, 404, 409n13; letter exchange with the Dalai Lama following the demonstration of 10 March, 384–87, 394–97, 402, 411, 416, 422–26, 436; and Mao's gradualist policy, 202–3; and Nehru visit, 216; on PLA winning over Tibetans, 328–29; Shigatse meeting (1958) and anger at Kashag, 217–21, 240, 366; in TWC leadership, 184, 206
Tara, 345, 346, 347, 364, 381, 403, 440–41, 442, 498
Targye Gomba Chushigandru unit, 277, 280
Taring, xvii
Tashi Bera, xxxiii, 79, 131–32, 283, 286, 420
Tashi Lingpa, 456
Tashilunpo Monastery, 455
Tashi Tomden (CIA trainee), 279
Tashi Tsering, xvii

Tatongwa, 360, 368

taxes: and autonomy of Tibet within China, 45, 223; China imposing no new taxes, 223, 265; Panchen Lama dispute about, 185; and Tibet as independent polity, 20

—ON THE MISER: categories of miser based on, 8; corveé transportation tax, 7, 221, 467; corveé work obligations as, 6, 7, 8, 202, 466, 467; and difficulty of provisioning Chushigandru, 253, 254, 260; reform policy on, 467, 468, 499n9

Temajog, Lobsang Nyendra, 234, 351–52

Temba Söpa (Tenpa Soepa), 343–44, 364, 386, 440, 457

Temba Thargye, 435

Tempa Dargye. *See* Chen Zhuneng

Tengchen, 462, 466

Thailand, 2, 47, 61, 147

theocratic-ecclesiastic political system. *See* Tibetan government

Theravada Buddhism, 2

Thomas, Evan, 53n75

Thonsur, 224–25

Three Monastic Seats, xxvii, xxxiii, 18–19; and emergency assemblies, 403; and invitation to the Dalai Lama to Chinese Military Headquarters, 402; and Lhasa Uprising, 403. *See also* Drepung Monastery; Ganden Monastery; Sera Monastery

Thubden Norbu, 241

Thubden Nyinji, 50–51, 52

Thubden Ramyang (monk official), 14

Thubden Samjog, 230, 246, 250, 251, 262–63, 264, 305, 306, 309, 393

Tian Bao, 37

Tibet (political): appeal to United Nations protesting PLA invasion, xv; currency of, 35, 36, 68, 223, 473; defined as term used in text, xv; ethnographic Tibet distinguished from, xiv–xv, *35*; exceptionalism of, 2, 19; Front/Back, used as rationale to argue for instatement of the Panchen Lama with equal political status as Dalai Lama, *xxxviii*, 189, 190, 192–97, 200, 202; geography of, and logistics of Chinese invasion, 22–23; maps, *xxxvi–xxxix*; modernizing movement (1913–25) blocked, 6, 313, 490; pöba as term for all Tibetans, 96; population of, 22. *See also* Dalai Lamas; ethnographic Tibet; independence of Tibet; Lhasa; Tibetan army; Tibetan culture; Tibetan government; Tibetan language; *names of people and places*

Tibetan army: and Chinese fortifications and defense preparations, 341; and Chushigandru, interest in, 79, 124, 130, 135, 282; compromise on wearing PRC uniforms on official Chinese occasions, 36, 237, 238–39; and conflict between the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, 185; continuation of, under Chinese occupation, 36, 68, 237–39; and demonstration of 10 March, decision not to deploy, 371–72, 415; and exile of the Dalai Lama, 421–22; the fall of Chamdo and destruction of, 24, 242, 243; merging into the PLA, 30, 35, 237–39; at Nagchuka, 225; no offensive battle plan for Lhasa Uprising, 443–44, 454–55; and Qinghai-Lhasa highway, shots fired near, 396–97; secret codicil authorizing continuation of, 237; secret mission to recruit and train local Tibetan militias, 306–8, 392–94, 420–21; and Sera Je College monastic disturbance, 242–43; in Seventeen-Point Agreement, 237, 239; size of, 22, 238, 239; treatment of, after Battle for Lhasa, 314, 353n97, 435n71, 456–57, 457, 463, 467–68; treatment of, after Chamdo defeat, 243n83; weapons cache protected from Chushigandru, 166, 240–42; weapons of, 239, 371. *See also* Bodyguard Regiment (Kusung); Gyantse Regiment; Shigatse (Gadang) Regiment; Trapchi Regiment

—PROPOSAL TO ATTACK CHUSHIGANDRU: alternatives that could have been taken but weren't, 499; and ambivalence of Tibetan government, 236–37, 243–45, 494–95; assembly meeting to consider, 225–31, 242; assembly resolution against, 230–31, 494; Chinese offer of PLA assistance if needed, 223, 244, 494, 499; Chinese pressure for, 223, 225–26, 243, 315–16, 494; fear that soldiers wouldn't obey orders, as ostensible reason for declining, 236–37, 239–42, 243, 244; Ngabö's regrets about not using, 231, 236–37; no deep-seated ethical principle that Tibetans should not make war and kill other Tibetans, 242–43; and status of Tibetan army (1958), 237–39; and weakness and fragmentation of Chushigandru, 244

Tibetan Buddhism: activities of, as pretext for political organizing, 75–77, 92, 129; as "civilizing project," 1–2; destruction of, 485–89, 495, 496–97, 500; freedom of religion as policy of Central Committee, 463–64, 466; geshe degree exams, 116–17, 213–14, *214*, 336–37,

Tibetan Buddhism *(continued)*
341–42, 363, 417; Gutor ceremony, 335; modernizing movement seen as danger to, 6; Mönlam Prayer Festival, 336–37, 341, 342, 343–44; new government edict addressing, 474, 476??? new fix. *See also* Dalai Lamas; divinations; Gelugpa sect; mass monasticism; monasteries; monks; *specific people and places*

Tibetan culture: CIA Tibet Project as failure that indirectly helped to destroy, 314; ethnic estrangement with the Chinese, acknowledged by Central Committee, 463, 465. *See also* Tibetan Buddhism; Tibetan language

Tibetan government (Dewashung, Ganden Phodrang): overview of Gelugpa sect theocratic-ecclesiastic system, 9–11; dual system of (chösi nyiden or chösi sungdrel), 9n11; encryption of telegraph communications by, 84, *85*, 428; expulsion of GMD from Lhasa, 21, 247n4; negative attitude toward Khambas, 96; People's Association as critical of, 30–31. *See also* assemblies (tsondu) (National Assemblies); Dalai Lamas; Kashag (Council of Ministers); Silön; Sitsab; taxes; Tibetan government under Chinese occupation (officially called Sane Sishung, or local government)

Tibetan government under Chinese occupation (officially called Sane Sishung or local government): Beijing meeting (1951) and negotiations on Panchen Lama, 196–201; continuation of, 36, 223–25; continuation of, and alternatives that could have been taken but weren't, 498–99; continuation of, Dalai Lama intention to preserve, 115–16, 118, 120, 225, 340, 361, 491; dissolution of (28 March 1959), 468–69, 473; ethnographic Tibetans denied help for resistance from, 57; as "local government" under Seventeen-Point Agreement, 25, 45, 224; Reform Office, 232, 233, 499n499; rumors of joint attack of Khambas and, 149, 341; U.S. State Department requirement of request for weapons from, 94–95, 103, 147, 271; weapons caches of, 166, 225, 239, 240–42 (*see also* Potala Palace—government arsenal in; Shang Ganden Chöngor government weapons cache seizure by Gombo Tashi). *See also* gradualist policy of incorporation of Tibet; internal autonomy of local Tibetan government; Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region; Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Liberation of Tibet (1951); Tibetan government (newly established at Lhüntse) (1959)

Tibetan government (newly established at Lhüntse) (1959): decision to establish, 473; edict proclaiming (26 March 1959), 473–76, 523–25; as Ganden Phodrang, 476; Lhüntse as location of, 476–77; plan for "away" government, as vague, 419, 472–73. *See also* end of old Tibet; exile of the Dalai Lama; Tibetan government-in-exile

Tibetan government-in-exile: international recognition of, as not forthcoming, 60–61, 500–502; Shungden worship banned, 432n66; as source for text, xvi. *See also* independence of Tibet

Tibetan language: and difficulty of encryption, 85–87; list of correct Tibetan spellings, 503–21; PLA troops learning, 32, 464. *See also* encryption

Tibetan Mint (Trapchi), 399

Tibetan Mirror newspaper, xix

Tibet Autonomous Region (rang gyong jong): formation of, 35, 36; percentage of population in monasteries, 2; as term, 35. *See also* Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region

Tibet Daily newspaper, xix

Tibet Independence Conference, 427. *See also* assemblies, emergency meetings in response to 10 March demonstration

Tibet Military Area Command. *See* Chinese Military Headquarters (Lhasa)

Tibet Oral History Archive Project (TOHAP), xvi; website for oral histories archive, xviii

Tibet Project. *See* CIA Tibet Project

Tibet Work Committee (TWC) (Ch. Xizang gongwei), xxxiii, *35*; Battle for Lhasa instructions from Mao/Central Committee, 452–53; and Beijing meeting (1953) to reaffirm gradualist policy, 202–3; and Beijing meeting (1957) to reaffirm gradualist policy, 67, 72; belief that the Kashag was covertly encouraging and supporting the insurrection, 217–19, 220, 321, 328–29, 341, 373, 402, 423, 469, 495; Central Committee direct oversight of, 72, 184, 330, 458; and Chushigandru movement out of Lhasa, 149–52; concern about influx of armed and angry Sichuan Khambas into Lhasa, 75, 149; dispute over leadership of,

between Fan Ming and Zhang Guohua, 181, 182–84, 204, 209; downsizing of, 71, 72, 203–4, 469; expulsion of the Blue Chinese, 121–22, 124; Gutor Festival attendance of members of, 335–36; Kashag request for meeting in Beijing (Nov. 1958), 317–22; Lhasa Uprising instructions from Mao/Central Committee, 404–8, 411–15; Lhasa Uprising reports to Central Committee, 401–4, 408–11, 415; militias, 325–26, 328, 431; and Namseling as choice for second delegation to Chushigandru, 249–50; 9/4 instructions on reforms sent to, 38–40, 44, 62, 64, 73, 203, 490; opposition to Mao's gradualist policy within, 33–34, 38, 67, 184–85, 202–5, 209–10, 407, 500; permission for religious activities, 76; reaction to public demonstration by Chushigandru, 77–78; and Tibetan Assembly oath of loyalty, 383; Zhang Jingwu as compromise First Secretary of, 183–84. *See also* Anti-Rightist Campaign (Mao Zedung); Chinese Military Headquarters (Lhasa); People's Liberation Army
Ting Fuwu, 222
Töpa Jamyang Trinley, 246n3
trade relationships, and strategic implications for China, 21–22
transportation. *See* airports; highways; horses and mules
Trapchi Monastery, 131
Trapchi Regiment of Tibetan Army, 79, 121, 124, 130, 229, 238–39; and arrest of Reting Rinpoche, 242–43; attempts to stop fighters from fleeing to India, and return to India, 482, 483; and Chushigandru, interest in, 79, 282; and demonstration of 10 March, 371–72, 498; and exile route, 432, 480, 482; and Gonggar Ambush, 341; and PLA Lhoka offensive (1959), 480; and return of Lobsang Yeshe, 420, 421–22; and Sera Je College monk's revolt, 242; and Shöl abbreviated assembly, 391. *See also* Sambo (Tsewang Rinzin)
Traya Lama Adru, 298
Tregang Khenjung (Changkyim), 228n46, 391–92, 399, 429–30
Trijang Rinpoche, xxxiii, 78, 432
Trindor (Trinley Dorje), xvii–xviii, 348, 353n97, 391n94
Trinley Dorje (Trindor), xvii–xviii, 348, 353n97, 391n94
Trip, xxxiii. *See also* artillery attack (PLA regiment at Trip)
Tri Ralpchen, 78
Tromo. *See* Yadong (Tromo)
Tromsigang, 239
Trungja ceremony, 153n6, 226, 342, 357, 359, 397–98
trungtsi, xxxiii, 226, 242, 375
trungtsigye, xxxiii
trunyichemmo, xxxiii
Tsadora Khenjung, 476–77
Tsakur estate, 418
tsamba, xxxiii
Tsang Province, as Back Tibet, 193n30, 200
Tsarong Dzasa (Tsarong Shape), 6, 313–14, 364n28, 376–77, 379, 391–92, 456, 490
Tsarong, Paljor, xvii, xviii
Tsarong Rimshi, 312–14
Tsecholing Monastery, 129
Tseden Gombo. *See* Panchen Lama (10th)
Tse ga, xxxiii, 13, 14, 226
Tseja Gyentsen, 49, 345, 346–47, 348, 351–52, 433
Tseja Thubden Lengmön, 427
Tselabdra school, xxxiii, 10
Tsetang (Chinese headquarters in Lhoka): attack on (first) (October 1958), 262–63, 299–302, 328; attack on (second) (January 1959), 298, 303–5, 422, 481; Chinese convoys to strengthen, 185–86, 302–3; Chinese militia formed in, 326; fortifications of, 299, 300, 303; Gonggar Ambush of convoy heading to (December 1958), 286, 287–93, 328, 341; and location of Chushigandru headquarters in Lhoka, 123, 263
Tsewang Dorje (CIA trainee), 38n35, 89, 97, 99, 101n2, 102, 103, 279
Tsewang Gyurme, 348
Tsewang Namgyel, 444
Tsewang Rinzin. *See* Sambo
Tshomönling, 450
Tsidrung Yeshe Thargye, 348
tsigang. *See* Revenue Office
tsipön, xxxiii
Tsipön Tsögo, 228n46
Tsögo, 228–29
Tsögosey Thöndrub Tsering, 226n37
Tsomönling Labrang, 379, 387
Tsöna, 262–63, 264, 273
tsondzin, xxxiv, 134

Tsuglagang Temple, xxxiv, 226; and Battle for Lhasa, 450; Chinese fortifications near, and safety of the Dalai Lama, 231–32, 341; and Mönlam, 336; Tibetan army troops guarding, 443
TWC. *See* Tibet Work Committee (TWC)

U-2 reconnaissance flights, and downing of, 484
Ulmer, Al, 53
United Front work department, 37, 71, 182, 183, 184, 187, 188, 329, 393, 410, 464–65
United Nations: case for Tibetan independence made on human rights vs. political grounds, 501; the fall of Chamdo and help sought by Tibet, 24; plea for help by Tibetan government, xv
United States: Chinese pressure to end support for Tibet via India by, 152; Cold War strategy against Communist China, 45, 46, 52, 54, 271–72, 481; and the Dalai Lama's decision to return to Lhasa (January 1957), 60–62; exile of the Dalai Lama (1959), notification of, 470–71, 472; exile of the Dalai Lama, relaying request for permission to enter India, 477–78; exile of the Dalai Lama, urging of (1950–51), 26, 45, 416–17; the fall of Chamdo and refusal of help to Tibet, 24; independence of Tibet not recognized by, 20, 61, 500–502; JKTS appeal letter to, 50–51; Lhasa Uprising and Tibetan hope for help from, 444; PRC fear of diplomatic and military relationship with Tibet, 21–22; trade with Tibet, 21. *See also* CIA; U.S. State Department
Upper Yangtze River (Tib. Drichu; Ch. Jinsha), as boundary of political and ethnographic Tibet, xv
Ü Province, as Front Tibet, 193n30, 200
Urgyen Tsering, 260–61
U.S. State Department: appeal for weapons and training for Tibet resistance, via Crown Prince of Sikkim, 47–49, 51, 95, 103, 113; on asylum for Dalai Lama, 51; on nonrecognition of Tibetan independence, 501; ordering CIA Tibet Project, 52; ordering weapons drop, 272; requirement of request for weapons from the Dalai Lama/Tibetan government, 94–95, 103, 147, 271, 478. *See also* CIA; United States

Volunteer Defenders of the Faith, (tanglang tensung magar), 135. *See also* Chushigandru

Waller, John, 54
Wangchen Gelek. *See* Surkhang
Wangchuk Tsering, 435
Wangden Tashi, 124, 282–83, 284, 285–86
Wangdü. *See* Gyadotsang Wangdü (CIA trainee)
Wang Feng, 204
Wang Gui, 362–63, 428, 430–31, 444–45, 458–60
Wang Guozhen, 326–27, 449–50
Wang Kang, 292, 459
Wang Nengqin, 169–70
Wang Qimei, xxxiv, 67n108, 203, 208, 210
Wang Weizhou, 184n9
Wang Zhen, 195
weapons: appeal for Tibet resistance, via Crown Prince of Sikkim, 41, 47–49, 51–52; Chushigandru and need for, 135–36; Chushigandru seizing from government arms depot (*see* Shang Ganden Chöngor), 53, 103, 113; Chushigandru seizing from PLA convoys, 288, 292; Chushigandru taking from dead PLA troops, 277; CIA providing to Chushigandru (*see* CIA Tibet Project); confiscation of, policy on, 467; heavy artillery, Gombo Tashi's desire for, 138, 141; Lee-Enfield "305" (303), 81n20, 272, 273, 275, 470n11; militias of local Tibetans and requirements for, 136, 305–6, 308–9; mimang guards, distribution to, 381, 397–98; Namseling and Chushigandru mission to Kalimpong to procure, 305–6, 309–14; old weapons provided by CIA, 88, 272, 314, 470; Radru Ngawang's plan to procure, 283, 284–85; supplied to CIA trainees, 99; of Tibetan army, 239; Tibetan government caches of, 166, 225, 239, 240–42 (*see also* Potala Palace––government arsenal in; Shang Ganden Chöngor government weapons cache seizure by Gombo Tashi); training by CIA, dispute about, 88, 89, 91, 93; urgency of Khamba need for, 88, 93, 135–36; U.S. State Department requirement of request for, from the Dalai Lama/Tibetan government, 94–95, 103, 147, 271, 478
Wen Feng, 412, 448–49, 450, 453–54
Whitehurst, Charlie, 139, 142
Wisner, Frank, on limited scope of Tibetan Project, 55
Wölkha Chöling, 105–6, 298
Wölkha Monastery, 106
women, rape of, 255, 257, 258, 261, 393
women's demonstrations (12–13 March 1959), 392, 444

Wön, 261
World War II, 119n56
Wu Chen, 446–47
Wu Jianli, 207, 209
Wu Kaizhang, xxxiv, 67n108, 184, 195–96
Wuyuk Dzomtang ambush (September 1958), 169–71, 217, 228, 292
Wylie, T. V., xix

Xi Jingping, xxxiv
Xikang Province, xivn2, xxxiv, 451
Xi Zhongxun, xxxiv, 184n9, 195
Xu Liqing, 193

Yadong (Tromo), xxxiii, xxxiv; CIA agent Athar and Chinese checkpoint at, 141, 148; expulsion of Blue Chinese, 122; India's mission office in, 21; removal of Dalai Lama to (1950–51), 14, 24, 26–27, 28, 29, 44, 183, 419; visit of Nehru to, 215–17
Ya Hanzhang, xxxiv, 67n108, 184, 195, 195–96, 202, 208
Yang Chuzhang, 458, 459–60
Yang Gang, 206
Yang Gongsu, 216
Yangri Monastery, 282
Yang Shangkun, 414n22, 438n81
Yeshe Lhündrup, 342–43, 345, 346, 347, 350, 351
yigtsang. *See* Ecclesiastic Office (yigtsang)
Yi minority, and forced land reforms in Sichuan, 36–37
Yin Chunhe, 288, 290–92
Yuan (Ambassador), 196
Yuan Shikai, 20
Yuan Xinhu, 188
Yügye Lhünpotse, 476
Yu Kai, 188
Yunnan Province: armed Khambas fleeing from, 154, 450; and Battle for Lhasa, 450, 451; and Chushigandru membership, 79; ethnographic Tibet and, xiv; policy of continued reforms in, 70
Yünphug, 105
Yuthok, xxxiv, 63, 118

Zhang Desheng, 207
Zhang Guohua, xxxi, xxxiv, 29, *35*; and anti-Chinese activities, 153, 171; and Anti-Rightist Campaign and fall of Fan Ming, 205–6, 207, 208, 209; and Battle for Lhasa, 448, 458, 459; and Chamdo campaign, 182–83n5; and demonstration of 10 March, 370; and dispute over leadership of TWC with Fan Ming, 181, 182–84, 204, 209; and escape of the Dalai Lama, Mao instructions to allow, 412; and Front/Back Tibet, 194, 202; and Mao's acceptance of military solution, 412; and Mao's gradualist policy, 38, 67, 72, 184, 202–3, 205; and reversal of Fan Ming's reforms, 72, 204
Zhang Jingwu, xxxiv, 26, *35*, 67n108, 184n9; and anti-Chinese activities, 32, 153, 171; and Anti-Rightist campaign and fall of Fan Ming, 204–5, 206, 207, 210; and Battle for Lhasa, 448; and dismissal of Sitsab, 33; and escape of the Dalai Lama, Mao instructions to allow, 412; as First Secretary of TWC, 183–84; and Mao's acceptance of military solution, 412; and Mao's gradualist policy, 38, 202–3; and perception of Chinese showing less respect for the Dalai Lama, 340; persuading the Dalai Lama to return to Lhasa from Yadong, 183; and Seventeen-Point Agreement negotiations, 184n9
Zhang Jun, xxxiv, 67n108, 184, 195–96
Zhang Xiangming, xvii, 205, 207, 208–9
Zhang Zongxun, 193
Zhan Huayu, 446, 451, 452
Zheng Huishan, 431
Zhou Enlai, xxxiv; establishment of PCTAR as new government, 468–69; and India as involved in Tibetan rebellion, 413; Nehru and, 269; and reform policy, 468; and Tibetan anti-Chinese activity in India, 152; visits to Dalai Lama in India to discuss reforms in Tibet, 44–45, 213, 322
Zhou Hongming, 459
Zhou Renshan, 67n108, 187, 205–6, 209
Zhu De, 187, 188
Zhu Jinyun, 302

Founded in 1893,
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
publishes bold, progressive books and journals on topics in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences—with a focus on social justice issues—that inspire thought and action among readers worldwide.

The UC PRESS FOUNDATION
raises funds to uphold the press's vital role as an independent, nonprofit publisher, and receives philanthropic support from a wide range of individuals and institutions—and from committed readers like you. To learn more, visit ucpress.edu/supportus.